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ABSTRACT

Public schools across the country are aiming to improve student performance by engaging in comprehensive school reform (CSR). This guide was created to help school districts make CSR an integral part of their strategies for improving student achievement. Five components for CSR are described: (1) Strategizing, whereby the district supports CSR by setting overall standards and goals, allocating resources, and evaluating progress over time; (2) Building Support, whereby the district informs stakeholders and gains the buy-in of the community in the school-reform process; (3) Facilitating Informed Choice, whereby the district helps each school develop a comprehensive school-reform strategy that meets its needs; (4) Forging a New Compact with Schools, whereby the district gives schools increased authority to pursue reform while holding them accountable for results; and (5) Building Capacity, whereby the district creates a capacity-building system that enables each school to strengthen teaching, learning, and leadership. Each of these components begins with a set of practical Action Steps, Action Questions, and Action Tools for exploring, reflecting upon, and organizing actions. A number of assessment tools are included to help in identifying how the district stands relative to the five components and in pinpointing areas in which the district needs immediate attention. (RT)

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Comprehensive School Reform

MAKING GOOD CHOICES

Districts Take the Lead

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Districts Take the Lead

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INTRODUCTION

Across the country, public schools are aiming to improve student performance dramatically by engaging in comprehensive school reform (CSR). CSR is different than other reform efforts. Its goal is not to revise certain components of a school's operations, but to redirect all the programs, structures, processes, and policies of the school toward the ultimate objective—improving student achievement.

The simple fact that schools are the organizations most directly serving students has kept much of the attention centered at that level. However, as external model providers have discovered, without the effective support of the district, CSR is difficult to implement. The table below shows some of the ways in which the district role has direct bearing on how successful whole school reform can be.

District Role in CSR		
Area in Which District Has a Role to Play	**Question**	**Possible Consequences**
Model Selection	Have we given all schools the time, information, and guidance they need to choose the best CSR model?	Studies suggest that schools implement models most effectively when they understand and support the design. Research also links strong implementation with higher student achievement.
Interaction With Models	Have we given the providers of our schools' CSR models the information and support they need?	CSR model providers have a better chance of succeeding if they are well informed about how standards, budgets, professional development, and other factors work in a district.
Evaluation/Accountability	• Have we measured those things that we want to be accomplished with the CSR strategy? • Have we supported schools in using evaluation results to improve student achievement? • Have we put into place the incentives and consequences that ensure each school's CSR strategy will improve student achievement?	As with any endeavor, knowing *what* needs to be changed, understanding and supporting *how* it can be changed, and having the incentives and rationale to make clear *why* the change should take place are necessary conditions of improvement.
Flexibility	Have we given each school the degree of flexibility that is well matched to its level of capacity and its CSR strategy?	Since CSR is most effective when schools can fully implement their CSR strategies, giving schools the flexibility to put their approaches into action is a critical ingredient to success.

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Area in Which District Has a Role to Play	Question	Possible Consequences
Teacher Hiring/Dismissal	Have we created a structure and process that allows schools to find and keep the best teachers?	Districts have a large role in determining which teachers go to what schools. Districts can support school-level reform by ensuring that schools have (a) equitable access to excellent teachers who support their particular CSR strategy and (b) the ability to remove ill-suited teachers.
Professional Development	• Have we given all teachers access to effective training and coaching. • What incentives have we established to encourage professional development? • In what ways do we ensure that the district-provided professional development is effective and has an impact on student learning? • Have we made an effort to coordinate district-provided staff development with that offered by the CSR models used in our district?	Just as a CSR model is only one element of a total CSR strategy, so too is the model-provided professional development only one piece of the staff development necessary for whole school improvement. Districts can help schools fill the gaps.
Resources/Budgeting	• Have we structured funding for CSR in a way that defines it as a new way of doing things, not as another specialized program? • Have we given schools the support and information they need to make good budgeting decisions? • Have we given schools the budget autonomy that matches their need to support their CSR strategy both at the program and organizational level.	"Actions speak louder than words" and nowhere is this more true than in regard to money. By allocating new resources and reallocating existing ones, and by building each school's capacity to budget for school improvement, districts can help ensure that CSR is not just another passing fad.
Principal Leadership	Do we help principals implement CSR effectively through a sound placement process, leadership training, and support of appropriate tenure in office?	Study findings indicate that a principal's support for and facilitation of CSR is a key ingredient in successful implementation.
Overall Support	• Have we actively expressed and acted upon our support for CSR? • Is the success of all students the primary consideration in all of the district's structures, policies, and procedures? • Have we fostered a recognition that the district office exists both to *serve* and to *guide* the schools?	Research shows that CSR is more likely to succeed in schools when districts support school-level change over time. Though public expression of support is important, districts can back up their words by allocating sufficient resources and by reorganizing their own operations to become more focused on serving schools and raising student achievement.

Making Good Choices: Districts Take the Lead was created to help districts like yours make comprehensive school reform an integral part of their strategies for improving student achievement. However, we believe that officials in any district will find helpful ideas for sparking school-based improvement.

This guide presents five components that describe district reform efforts that support, shape, and enrich school improvement. These components represent a coordinated and ongoing process that districts should revisit regularly.

1. **Strategizing.** The district supports comprehensive school reform by setting overall standards and goals, allocating resources, and evaluating progress over time.
2. **Building Support.** The district informs stakeholders and gains the buy-in of the community in the school reform process.
3. **Facilitating Informed Choice.** The district helps each school develop a comprehensive school reform approach that meets its needs.
4. **Forging a New Compact With Schools.** The district gives schools increased authority to pursue reform while holding them accountable for results. Further, the district reflects on how its own role might change to support CSR.
5. **Building Capacity.** The district creates a capacity-building system that enables each school to strengthen teaching, learning, and leadership.

Each of these components begins with a set of Action Steps your district can take to support comprehensive school reform. These steps are listed in a box labeled "...at a glance" and then discussed one by one. Along the way, sidebars offer helpful information. At the end of each component section, you'll find Action Questions to guide your district in implementing its ideas and Action Tools to help you reflect upon and organize your actions.

The actions proposed within each component often involve changing the structures of the school district—the way offices are organized, the way funding flows, or the way authority is distributed. It is important to point out, however, that structural change alone cannot guarantee school improvement. Changes in the attitudes and orientations of everyone involved—from the student to the superintendent—are required. This kind of "cultural" change is hard work and requires a level of time, effort, and dedication that no written document can produce. While this guide provides some helpful starting points, these ideas can only lay the groundwork for the work readers will carry out.

We would also point out that while many of the concepts in this guide apply to most school districts, you'll want to adjust the ideas to meet your individual needs. We've included a number of assessment tools you can use to identify where your district stands relative to the five components. Completing this assessment should help you pinpoint the areas in which your district needs immediate attention.

STRATEGIZING

One of the best things about the strategic plan was how quickly we developed it. Just the fact that we did it so fast was a morale boost. People felt we were really going to make things happen—we weren't just going to talk about making things happen.
—*Executive Director of Human Resources, Seattle Public Schools*[1]

A district must make a number of decisions to determine why and how it will make CSR the centerpiece of its strategy to improve student achievement. Since a successful comprehensive school reform approach requires a long-term commitment, any district undertaking this reform must have a strong understanding of its mission and the vision of and a strategy for its future educational system. To do this, a district needs to determine where it is now, where it wants to go, and how it plans to get there.

Though the district's mission and general vision should be guiding factors during the CSR journey, relying on an initial strategy in the face of unexpected evidence or circumstances could actually derail a district's support of CSR. Intelligent flexibility is a necessity. Additionally, waiting to begin reform until every component has been outlined perfectly is a quick means of complete inaction. Thus, strategizing—as well as all the other components in this guide—should be seen as an ongoing aspect of comprehensive school reform, not as a discrete step toward an end goal.

Strategizing at a glance

- Identify or revisit the district's key priorities.
- Determine if supporting CSR will further the district's mission, vision, and goals.
- Identify the district's key assets.
- Determine the method and schedule of implementation.
- Determine how the district will pay for incorporating CSR.
- Determine evaluation strategies.

Getting Started

Action Step: *Identify or revisit the district's key priorities*

If your school district is like others across the nation, you've developed mission statements, identified your core values, established visions of the future, identified district needs, and set concrete goals and standards. You may also have developed systems to collect data and assess progress toward these targets. As a first step toward developing a strategy for CSR, it is helpful to use this information to identify your district's key priorities for improvement. Only then can your district determine whether and how CSR can help it get where it is going.

For most districts, interest in CSR evolved on a different timeline than their strategic planning process. Many districts engage in a strategic planning process that sets the direction for a five-year period. Revisiting the strategic plan, the district mission, vision, and underlying values is essential to identifying whether CSR is a strategy that will further your district's improvement goals.

If your district hasn't gone through a strategic planning process, then doing so with the input of multiple stakeholders will make your districts' plans for its future more concrete. Specifically, you'll want to develop:

- An assessment of where the district is today and what factors can be expected to influence it in the future.

- A mission statement that clearly and concisely describes the district's purpose.
- A vision that reflects the values and beliefs of the district.
- Long-range goals that make the mission and vision tangible.
- An identification of desired outcomes.
- An action plan that includes goals, benchmarks, and timelines.
- An evaluation plan.

The following Action Tools can help you get started: **Action Tool 1: District Data Collection** will help you determine the availability and accessibility of data needed to help identify your priorities. **Action Tool 2: Mission, Vision, and Goals** is useful for assessing whether your district has a well-developed mission, vision, and goals that support CSR. **Action Tool 3: Priorities** can help central office personnel set and prioritize benchmarks for the areas your district has targeted for improvement.

Resources for Rethinking the District Role

Quellmalz, E., Shields, P. M., Knapp, M.S., with Bamburg, J. D., Anderson, L., Hawkins, E., Hill, L., Ruskus, J., & Wilson, C. L. (1995). Beyond the schoolhouse: What districts can do to support school-based reform. In *School-based reform: Lessons from a national study. A guide for school reform teams*. [Online]. Available: www.ed.gov/pubs/Reform

Davis, D., Sagmiller, K., & Hagans, R. (1999). *Implementing school reform models: The Clover Park experience*. [Online]. Available: www.nwrel.org/csrdp/clover.html

Odden, A. (n.d.). *How to create and manage a decentralized school system*. New American Schools Getting Better by Design Series. [Online]. Available: www.naschools.org/resource/howto/oddec.pdf

Redesigning the urban school district. (1997). Education Commission of the States. [Online]. Available: www.ecs.org

Reinventing central office: A primer for successful schools. Cross city campaign for urban school reform. (1995, May). [Online]. Available: www.crosscity.org/pubs

States and districts and comprehensive school reform. (1998, May). CPRE Policy Brief. [Online]. Available: www.gse.upenn.edu/cpre/docs/pubs/rb24.pdf

Action Step: ***Determine if supporting CSR will further the district's mission, vision, and goals.***

Supporting comprehensive school reform will entail a great deal of change at both the school and central office levels. In order to determine if this is the approach your district wants schools to pursue, the district should identify that it has a need for CSR, assess whether it is ready to support it, and identify which CSR models are a good "fit" with the schools.

1. Identify if schools' needs for change are "comprehensive."

As suggested in the introduction to this guide, CSR involves the complete transformation of every component of the school. This does not necessarily mean redoing everything that the school does—all schools will have strengths on which they should build. But in schools requiring comprehensive reform, a number of components are not working, either individually or as part of a complete strategy. Schools in which only one or two programs or processes are not contributing to the overall successful functioning and strategy of the school may not need to engage in comprehensive reform.

2. Assess district readiness

If your district has determined that a number of schools could benefit from comprehensive reform, it then needs to decide if it is prepared to undergo the transformation necessary to support it. **Action Tools 1** through **7** can help your district determine if it can rethink its role and provide the support necessary to make schools' implementation of CSR a success.

3. Assessing model compatibility

Another step in deciding whether to adopt CSR involves assessing if available CSR models align with your state and district standards and philosophy. There are dozens of externally developed CSR models available, each with its own unique philosophy and components. (See Resources for Selecting an Appropriate CSR Model on page 53 in the Facilitating Informed Choice component.) After examining these models, your district may decide that few or none of them adequately address the objectives and vision established by the district. In that case, your district may choose one of the following options:

- Establish the infrastructure to help model designers meet the standards in the district.
- Limit the model choices to only those that do support state and district goals.
- Craft homegrown CSR models.
- Elect not to pursue CSR.

Resources for Direction Setting

Establishing vision, values, and mission:

Reasons for hope, voices for change: A *report of the Annenberg Institute on public engagement for public education*. (n.d.). Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform. See www.aisr.brown.edu/html/publications/pubreports.html #reasons for ordering information.

Setting goals:

Levesque, K. (Ed.), Ross, K., Bradley, D., & Teitelbaum, P. (1998). *At your fingertips: Using everyday data to improve schools*, MPR Associates. See http://www.mprinc.com/html/resources/ayf_brochure_main.htm for a description.

Potential District Assets

- Strong and stable leadership
- Positive relationship with the media
- Dedicated school/ district personnel
- Supportive constituents
- Commitment to continuous improvement
- Support from area businesses
- New grants or other funding
- Partnerships with area teaching colleges
- Collaboration with other (e.g., social service) organizations

Action Step: *Identify the district's key assets.*

A third step in deciding if CSR is right for you involves assessing your district's strengths.

As with any reform effort, you should try to build on the strengths you have rather than assume you have to start from scratch.[2] Identifying your assets serves at least three purposes:

- It helps determine if encouraging many schools to engage in CSR makes sense. Ask yourself whether the challenges and assets of the district call for CSR.
- It allows your district to catalogue its strengths and rethink how it will target them toward the ultimate goal of improving student achievement. (This is an important concern discussed more in depth in the "Determine the Method and Schedule of Implementation" action step below.)
- It serves as moral support to demonstrate to the district that it does indeed have (perhaps previously unidentified) strengths that will aid it in reform.

Focusing on a "deficit model"—one that looks for what is wrong with your district—can bring morale down and could derail improvement efforts. **Action Planning Tool 4: Asset Mapping** can help you identify those areas in the district that are strengths and can provide points from which to leverage the work toward the desired improvement goals.

Taking the Big Step:

Action Step: *Determine the method and schedule of implementation.*

Districts supporting CSR in their schools have proceeded with implementation in many different ways. In some districts, all schools are pursuing CSR; in others, only a few. In some districts, most schools pursuing CSR are following a relatively small number of prescribed approaches; in others, schools have more choices. The following questions and answers can help you decide which method or schedule is right for your district.

Q: **How many schools should begin implementation?**

A: **Only a strategic subset initially. Design a long-term strategy that includes both a pilot set of schools and a scale-up strategy.**

Requiring all schools to adopt CSR models immediately may not make sense if some schools are simply not ready for or need less comprehensive reform. Districts should pursue full-scale implementation only after schools have had some preparation time and the opportunity to discover (in cooperation with the district) if CSR is an appropriate strategy. If your assessment determines that all or the majority of schools in your district will engage in CSR, be sure to design an implementation timeline and a plan for engaging a small set of schools at first, bringing other schools on in a systematic way.

Though resource availability might limit the number of schools a district designates for CSR, only requiring a few schools to implement

CSR models has its drawbacks. For instance, district capacity and structure will not likely be reshaped to support those few schools, making successful adoption more difficult. Small-scale implementation implies that CSR is a special and competing program, not a new, districtwide approach to public education.

In addition, there are some benefits to having a number of schools implement the same CSR model. First, the district and the reform models will be able to provide assistance more efficiently if a number of schools request the same type of help. Second, schools will have a network of support. Third, as more and more schools throughout the district adopt CSR models, they can be showcases for schools considering model adoption.

***Q:* Which schools should begin implementation?**

***A:* Those schools that demonstrate a need for and commitment to CSR and that together represent the districtwide scope of the reform.**

Districts may have a natural inclination to target reform measures toward the most needy schools, given the need to match resources to priorities. Title I schools or low-performing schools would therefore be tempting places to begin CSR model implementation. However, districts should keep in mind a number of factors before starting:

- Which schools have a strong plan for and commitment to CSR?
- Which schools have the capacity to begin CSR?
- In what schools would your resources best be used?
- Which cross-section of schools will demonstrate that CSR represents a new way of thinking for everyone in public education, not simply a special program for certain schools?

***Q:* How much choice should districts allow schools in selecting models?**

***A:* "Some" choice to "complete" choice.**

Researchers suggest that models are more likely to succeed when schools adopt them willingly. Some districts have given schools complete choice in selecting CSR models. In this way, schools obtain the true local autonomy for which many advocate. If accompanied by true accountability and a good deal of district assistance during selection, this approach is an effective means of pursuing CSR.

Many districts, however, have opted to limit schools' choices. These limitations are often based on a district's perception of models' incompatibility with district standards. For example, some models may not have the strong literacy component that the district has made a priority and part of its standards. A district may also choose to eliminate certain models based on their track records of effectiveness or the quality of services they provide. Finally, a district may be tempted to eliminate models that subscribe to philosophies or use practices that some constituents find objectionable. In general, it is more advisable at the district level to eliminate only those models that clearly don't meet district/state standards or are found to be ineffective and to allow the individual school community to decide whether or not it favors the philosophy and practices of a particular model.

Resources for Model Implementation

Bodilly, S. (1998). *Lessons from New American Schools' scale-up phase: Prospects for bringing designs to multiple schools.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp.

Bodilly, S., & Berends, M. (1999). Necessary district support for comprehensive school reform. In G. Orfield & E. DeBray (Eds.), *Hard work for good schools: Facts not fads in Title I reforms.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, The Civil Rights Project.

Key ingredients in the reform recipe. (1999, April 14). *Education Week on the Web.* [Online]. Available: www.edweek.org/ew/vol-18/31impls1.h18

Action Step: *Determine how the district will pay for incorporating* CSR.

Funding CSR is the bottom-line consideration that may cause your district to pause before making a commitment. It is, however, likely that your district can establish and maintain a CSR approach if it has a financial strategy that relies on reallocation but makes use of available new funding. **Action Tool 5: Financial Resources** can aid your district in determining if its current budgeting process will work in the context of CSR.

When exploring whether it can afford CSR, your district needs to keep in mind four specific financial planning considerations:

1. Determining the cost of CSR.

The total cost of implementing CSR includes:

- ***School costs associated with adopting a CSR model:*** fees paid to model providers for consulting, professional development sessions, materials, and so on. These fees will vary depending on the model selected, the number of students and teachers at the school, the intensity of services needed, the length of the contract, and the accessibility of the school to the model provider (e.g., distance between the model provider and the school, existence of a "cluster" of other schools nearby using the same model).
- ***Costs associated with model adoption, but not included in the model provider's fees:*** paying for additional teacher roles, substitutes when teachers attend the model's professional development sessions, technology required by the model, and so on.
- ***School costs associated with other activities related to* CSR:** any activities that are necessary to support the school's CSR strategy but are not a part of the adopted CSR model. Examples include professional development not covered by the model but outlined in the overall CSR strategy and evaluation expenses related to CSR.
- **District costs associated with CSR-related activities:** costs of informing stakeholders about CSR, building schools' capacities to choose and implement CSR, and evaluating CSR's progress.

Action* Tool 6: *Cost Planning can help your district brainstorm potential costs and resources associated with implementing CSR.

The fees quoted by a CSR model are only one part of the total costs incurred by the school. According to Keltner's study of New American Schools (NAS) model, the "average" model at the "average" school costs $162,000 in the academic year of the study.[3] This included teacher time, personnel to support CSR, services provided by the model provider, materials, and conferences. However, a "cost" is not the same as an out-of-pocket expense. Many of the "costs" associated with implementing a CSR model, such as curricular materials and teacher planning time, represent costs the school is already incurring. The schools would simply substitute one set of expenses for another. Thus, the school or district should not fear that they will be spending an additional $162,000 to fund the CSR model. However, they should

be aware that the fees quoted by the model provider do not take into account many of the expenses associated with CSR, such as those identified above.

2. Finding resources for CSR.

Comprehensive school reform requires significant reallocation of resources and potentially new sources of funding. Allen Odden, in *How to Rethink School Budgets to Support School Transformation*,[4] lays out three main strategies for funding a CSR model:

a. Dedicate the school's Title I resources.

b. Reallocate the school's existing resources.

c. Create an investment fund at the district level to support start-up costs.

Although Odden's strategies are directed at funding the New American Schools model, it is clear that they can be applied to all CSR models:

a. ***Dedicate the school's Title I resources.*** This option provides a relatively straightforward means of funding resources. By targeting Title I resources to CSR, schools will be able to afford a variety of models. Odden calculates that a 500-student school in which 50 percent of the students are eligible for Title I would receive $175,000 through Title I. This amount would cover a significant portion of CSR expenses.

b. ***Reallocate the school's existing resources.*** With the availability of funding through federal Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRD) grants and other additional states funds, it may be tempting to "layer" new CSR money on top of existing resources. Using new CSR money without rethinking how the budget is currently allocated is not a strong long-term strategy. First, relying on grants may implicitly encourage schools to select a model based on its likelihood of being funded rather than its appropriateness for the school. Second, most grants last only one to three years. If a CSR strategy relies on short-term funds for its existence, then the CSR strategy will most likely last only for the duration of the short-term grant. Both the district and the school must be prepared to make hard reallocation decisions to fund the strategy. This is not only important for avoiding a budget shortfall when the grants cease, but also for demonstrating the district and school commitment to CSR as the central strategy for education.

c. ***Create an investment fund at the district level to support start-up costs.*** The initial demand of start-up costs of CSR models and the time needed to go through the reallocation process both require the establishment of an investment fund from which schools can draw in the beginning stages of CSR implementation. Creating a CSR investment fund is one means of giving schools access to additional resources in a way that clearly communicates the district's commitment. Odden offers the following options for creating an investment fund for start-up costs:

Where Do Other Schools Find Resources?

An examination of 58 schools implementing New American Schools designs revealed that, based on an average expenditure of $162,000 for a CSR model, schools funded 38 percent through reallocation of the school's personnel, substitutes, and materials budgets. About 33 percent came from reallocating Title I funds, 18 percent from district funds, 7 percent from outside grants, and 4 percent from volunteer sources.[5] Though the resource requirements of CSR models and the circumstances of schools/districts vary, these percentage breakdowns may serve as a guide for districts deliberating budget considerations for CSR.

- Pooling the district's teacher-focused staff development funds
- Applying for the state's categorical programs dedicating school improvement money already furnished by the state
- Earmarking any budget increases due to inflation or other adjustments for use in the investment fund, carving out a small percentage within the established budget[4]

3. Matching resources to priorities and measuring the outcomes.

Once a district has established its priorities for comprehensive reform within the school system, it should then allocate its available funding to its priorities in order of importance, thus ensuring the most pressing ones get funded first. A continuous review or well-defined feedback loop that identifies priorities and matches them with resources is, unfortunately, not often the primary tactic in budgeting. There are, however, studies that demonstrate how it can be done. One example of this is the creation of a professional development "cost map" to track spending in three districts.[5] By collecting the relevant professional development data, the researchers were able to determine if district money aligned with district goals. The same type of assessment was performed on time, type, and personnel involved in professional development. It is important to note that money is not the only resource that should be assessed as to how well it is allocated for priorities. **Action Tool 7: Professional Development Cost Mapping** is an adaptation of this work.

As a means of relating spending to goals, districts should also assess if they are spending money in ways that result in improved outcomes in the classroom. For example, evaluating the effect of professional development on student achievement would likely involve a complex process of teacher assessment of professional development opportunities, evaluations of teachers using skills learned during staff development, and measurement of student achievement within those teachers' classrooms.[6]

4. Communicating budget decisions with schools.

The division of budget autonomy varies from district to district, but no matter who has primary control over schools' budgets, the district has the responsibility to make clear to schools how and by whom their chosen CSR model will be funded. Adopting a CSR model can be a complicated process, and this is only compounded if there is not regular and open communication between the central office and the school. When communication fails, schools in districts incorporating CSR have found themselves with budget shortfalls—lacking the money they believed had been promised by the district office. To avoid these budget crises and resultant tension between the school and the district office, districts should work carefully with the school to determine the balance between new funds and reallocation, and between district responsibility and school responsibility.

Resources for Cost Data on CSR Models

Catalog of school reform models. (n.d.). Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. [Online]. Available: www.nwrel.org/scpd/natspec/catalog

An educator's guide to school reform. (n.d.). American Institutes for Research. [Online]. Available: www.aasa.org/Reform

Keltner, B. R. (1998). *Funding comprehensive school reform*. RAND Education Issue Paper IP-175. [Online]. Available: www. rand.org/publications/IP

Odden, A. (1998, September). Creating school finance policies that facilitate new goals. CPRE *Policy Brief*. [Online]. Available: www.upenn.edu/gse/cpre/docs/pubs/rb26.pdf

Odden, A. (n.d.). *How to rethink school budgets to support school transformation*. New American Schools. [Online]. Available: www.naschools.org/resource/howto/oddenbud.pdf

Miles, K. H. (1999). *Resource review guide*. New American Schools: Professional Development Spending Project. Arlington, VA.

Action Step: ***Determine evaluation strategies.***

As with any reform effort, it is vital for your district to assess over time whether comprehensive school reform is indeed helping the district achieve its objectives. At the core of this assessment is an evaluation of whether each school engaged in CSR is meeting its goal. This kind of "summative" evaluation is critical for understanding whether the CSR strategy is working. But summative evaluation alone isn't enough. To get the most out of outcome measurement, your district must couple it with "formative" evaluation—efforts to determine how and why the CSR strategy is or is not working. This kind of information is critical if the district and its schools are to use evaluation to foster ongoing improvement and data-driven decision making.

Two kinds of formative evaluation are important in the context of CSR.

1. Districts and schools need ways of assessing the *quality of implementation* of CSR in schools. Research shows that the effectiveness of comprehensive reform in improving student achievement depends on how well schools implement CSR approaches. Therefore, districts and schools need to make assessing implementation part of their evaluation process. Rather than focusing strictly on outcomes, this kind of evaluation looks at the factors—the inputs and activities—that are believed to *contribute* to results. Such analysis can help schools and the district diagnose problems that arise and determine solutions.
2. Districts also need to assess *their own success at creating the conditions* in which comprehensive school reform can flourish. **Action Tools 1, 2, 4,** and **5** can be used for ongoing assessment, giving the districts information about how well they are maintaining the different components. Districts need to put in place a strategy for continually assessing themselves on these dimensions. That information, combined with bottom-line school performance data, will help districts assess how well CSR is working over time. The topic of evaluation in relation to accountability will be discussed in the fourth component, Forging a New Compact with Schools.

Endnotes

1. Stanford, J. (1999). *Victory in our schools: We can give our children excellent public education.* New York: Bantam Books.
2. Kretzmann & McKnight (1996) have focused their work in asset-mapping strategies for community development. Their work has been adapted in urban development, schools, and nonprofit organizations as a tool that uncovers positive aspects and assets that can be capitalized on to move toward a desired goal. See *Building communities from inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets* (ACTA Publications).
3. Keltner, B. (1998). *Funding comprehensive school reform.* RAND Education Issue Paper IP-175, 1998. [Online]. Available: http://www.rand.org/PUBS/index.html
4. Odden, A. (n.d.). *How to rethink school budgets to support school transformation.* New American Schools. [Online]. Available: http://www.naschools.org/districts_how.html
5. Keltner, 1998.
6. Odden, n. d.
7. Miles, K. H. (1999). *Making time for transforming teaching: The district role.* Arlington, VA: New American Schools.
8. Tom Guskey of the University of Kentucky has done extensive work in this field. See, for example, his forthcoming book, *Evaluating professional development* (Corwin Press).

Resources for Evaluation

The comprehensive school reform formative evaluation process for school improvement. (n.d.). [Online]. Available: www.ael.org/rel/csr/formeval.htm

Cicchinelli, L. F., & Barley, Z. (1999). *Evaluating for success.* Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning. [Online]. Available: www.mcrel.org/products/school-improve/evalguide.pdf

Yap, K., Douglas, I., Railsback, J., Shaughnessy, J., & Speth, T. (1999). *Evaluating whole-school reform efforts: A guide for district and school staff.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. [Online]. Available: www.nwrac.org/pub/whole-school.html

Indicators: Definition and use in a results-based accountability system. (n.d.). Harvard Family Research Project. [Online]. Available: http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp/releases/rba/tips/indicator.html

Learning from logic model: An example of a family/school partnership. (n.d.). [Online]. Available: http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp/family-school/html/logic.pdf

Ross, S. (n.d.). *How to evaluate comprehensive school reform models.* New American Schools: Getting Better by Design. [Online]. Available: www.naschools.org/resource/publications.html

U.S. Department of Education. Available: www.ed/gov (Includes links to a guide and PowerPoint presentation on the steps involved in Continuous Improvement Management (CIM) as well as the Annual Performance Review that all 21st Century Community Learning Centers must complete.)

Action Questions: Strategizing

- Based on school data, political climate, funding climate, or other information, what are the main challenges/crises facing the district? How should the district prioritize them? (Tools 1 and 3)
- What are some ways the district could use its assets to address its challenges? (Tool 4)
- Based on the district's research on available models, what steps should the district take to ensure that the models will support the overall district mission, vision, and goals?
  - Allow complete choice, but work closely with schools and model providers to revise model components as necessary to meet state and district standards?
  - Limit the model choices to those that can clearly meet the state and district standards with little or no revision?
  - Develop or allow schools to develop homegrown CSR models that clearly support state and district standards?
  - Other?
- Based on current financial resources, experiences in other districts, political factors, stakeholder input, or other considerations, what percentage of the district's schools should pursue CSR immediately? In the near future?
- Based on current financial resources, experiences in other districts, political factors, stakeholder input, or other considerations, what percentage of different "types" of the district's schools should pursue CSR?
  - Title I/low-performing schools
  - Traditional schools
  - Alternative schools
  - Charter schools
  - Focus schools
  - Other
- Based on current financial resources, economies of scale, district capacity, experiences in other districts, political factors, stakeholder input, or other considerations, should the district encourage a group of schools to adopt the same model? If so, how?
- What structures and processes could the district put in place to develop a CSR funding strategy (i.e., division between reallocated and new fund sources, division between district financial responsibility and school financial responsibility)? Who (department, team, etc.) would take lead responsibility for funding strategy development? (Tool 6)
- What structures and processes could the district employ to ensure that financial and other resources are directly targeted toward district priorities? Who (department, team, etc.) would take lead responsibility for this "cost mapping"? (Tools 5 and 7)
- What steps should the district take to help schools find additional financial resources?
- Who (department, team, etc.) would take lead responsibility for this support service?
- What structures and processes could the district employ to ensure that schools are informed about and understand the budgeting arrangements for CSR? Who (department, team, etc.) would take lead responsibility for that undertaking?
- What structures and processes, if any, could the district employ to evaluate or monitor implementation factors in the adoption of CSR models? Who (department, team, etc.) would take lead responsibility for this evaluation?

ACTION TOOL 1:
DISTRICT DATA COLLECTION

Directions: A key step in setting priorities is ensuring the district has the information needed to determine particular areas of strengths and weaknesses. This checklist can help the district lay out the current status of its data. Put an "X" in the column that most closely describes the status of data availability and data accessibility. The Notes column may be used to jot down needed data or to record ideas and issues.

To what degree does the district possess or have access to the following data to help it in identifying its priorities? What information does the district need that it does not yet have?

Data Availability	No Data Available Now	Some Data Collected, Need More	Enough Data to Make an Assessment	Data Collected Over the Years	Notes
Student Achievement					
By school					
By grade level					
By student subgroup					
By subject area (e.g., math)					
Student Promotion Rates					
By school					
By student subgroup					
Student Attendance Rates					
By school					
By student subgroup					
Incidents of School Violence					
Demographic Trends					
Of students					
Of teachers					
Of community (e.g., percentage with school-age children)					
Teacher-Preparedness Levels (e.g., level of degree, area of major versus subject area being taught)					
Professional Development Opportunities (e.g., topic areas, quantity of, scheduling of, teacher evaluation of)					
Levels of Turnover					
At district level					
At school level					

Data Availability	No Data Available Now	Some Data Collected, Need More	Enough Data to Make an Assessment	Data Collected Over the Years	Notes
Parent Involvement Rates (e.g., percentage that volunteer, attend PTA meetings, help with homework, support fund-raising, join committees)					
Community Support (measured by surveys, focus groups, etc.)					
Available Technological Equipment and Support Services					
Facility Need					
Data Accessibility	**Not at All**	**Somewhat**	**For the Most Part**	**Fully**	**Notes**
Precautions are taken to ensure that data is not lost or stolen.					
Precautions are taken to ensure confidentiality of student information.					
The data is easily accessible to all those authorized to use it.					
The data is logically categorized.					
Data from all important district departments and functions is aggregated and made available to users.					
The data is presented in an understandable format.					

ACTION TOOL 2:
MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

Directions: Use this tool to consider if and to what extent the district possesses a mission, vision, and goals that support CSR. Put an "X" in the column that most closely describes how well the district meets the following objectives. Use the Notes column to identify any area the district would like to make a priority or to make other brief comments.

Does the district possess...	Not at All	Somewhat	For the Most Part	Fully	Notes
A mission statement that is: • Concise? • Captures the fundamental purpose of the district?					
A vision statement that offers an overall direction for the future of the district and is shared by most or all stakeholders?					
Goals that are: • Meaningful? • Realistic? • Complementary? • Given clear priority? • Agreed to by all stakeholders? • Measurable? • Few in number?					

ACTION TOOL 3: PRIORITIES

Directions: Based on gathered data, funding climate, political climate, projected economic trends, and other information, record the district's top priorities for improvement. Then, record the district's long-term goal for each priority area as well as benchmarks for achieving it.

Priority	Long-term Goal	Benchmark Year 1	Benchmark Year 2	Benchmark Year 3	Benchmark Year 4

ACTION TOOL 4: ASSET MAPPING

This tool is based on a recent study[1] that found that the more successful reform-implementing districts were those that took the time to understand the substantive ideas of the reform and then took the steps necessary to help teachers understand how these ideas affected teaching and learning. Stated differently, those districts that developed their assets of human and social capital (while dedicating adequate financial resources) achieved better results. This tool offers examples of these assets in the context of CSR as well as provides sample sources of evidence for what a district harnessing these assets might look like. (Districts should rate themselves in terms of the asset, not the sample sources of evidence. The sample sources are simply examples, not necessarily steps your district should take.)

Directions: Use this tool to record how prepared/willing the district is to attend to these human and social capital needs. (The **Financial Resources, Cost Planning,** and **Professional Development Cost Mapping** Strategizing Action Tools can help guide the district on financial resource assessment.) Use the blank section at the end of each category to record your ideas on how your particular district might want to develop that particular type of asset.

[1]Spillane, J. P., & Thompson, C. L. Looking at local districts' capacity for ambitious reform. CPRE Policy Bulletin [Online]. Available: gse.upenn.edu/cpre/docs/pubs/pb-05.pdf

Human Capital	Sample Sources of Evidence	Not at All	Some-what	For the Most Part	Fully
District leaders and staff are committed to supporting CSR over the long-term.	• School board has pledged to hire only superintendents willing to support and promote CSR. • District has allocated money to fund long-term operating costs of CSR.				
District leaders and staff are committed to keeping abreast of developments in CSR.	• District personnel are actively encouraged to review Web sites, announcements, and publications related to CSR on a regular basis. • District has instituted an annual training session for district staff on supporting CSR.				
District leaders and staff are committed to learning about effective, research-based practices in the classroom.	• District personnel are expected to spend a certain amount of time each month examining research, attending conferences, etc., related to teaching and learning practices. • District personnel regularly survey teachers to discover how well specific practices are working in the classroom.				
District leaders and staff are committed to learning about and implementing the steps necessary to help school personnel understand CSR and CSR models.	• District personnel read case studies about how other districts informed school faculty about CSR and CSR models. • District researches and creates a list of CSR models that most easily fit within state/district standards and provides a resource team to help schools select a CSR model most appropriate for their circumstances.				

Ideas for Building Human Capital

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Social Capital	Sample Sources of Evidence	Not at All	Some-what	For the Most Part	Fully
District leaders and staff are committed to building a trusting and collaborative relationship with all schools.	• District leaders establish weekly "office hours" so that teachers and principals might discuss issues with them. • The district creates support teams to provide technical assistance to schools.				
District leaders and staff are committed to facilitating networks that allow school personnel to share ideas, resources, and experiences with personnel in other schools.	• The district establishes clusters of schools whose faculties meet on a monthly basis. • The district sets up e-mail accounts for all teachers as well as an electronic e-mail list for discussion around facilitated topics.				
District leaders and staff are committed to building a network with personnel in other districts as a means of sharing ideas, resources, and experiences.	• The district invites personnel from the surrounding districts to attend training on CSR. • The district sets up a quarterly video-conference around issues selected by the participating district representatives.				
District leaders are committed to building a relationship with external agencies (e.g., universities, research institutions) that are engaged in and knowledgeable about educational best practices as a means of bridging the gap between educational research and educational practice.	• The district partners with the local teaching college to bring professors and student teachers into the classrooms on a regular basis to observe the current teaching environment. The college agrees to enroll current teachers in classes for a reduced price. • The district works with a nonprofit research institution in evaluating the schools' outcomes and in training teachers in data analysis.				
District leaders and staff are committed to keeping the community informed and involved in the school improvement process.	• The district holds a series of "visioning sessions" in which community members are invited to share their views and concerns about school improvement. • The district includes a number of community representatives who serve on a committee that reviews the assessment mechanisms by which schools are evaluated.				
District leaders and staff are committed to building relationships with area businesses and community organizations as a means of gaining support and soliciting input.	• The district works with the Chamber of Commerce to identify businesses that might provide volunteers to teach sessions on real-world matters to students. • The district invites and trains business, civic, and faith community leaders to serve on school review teams.				

Social Capital	Sample Sources of Evidence	Not at All	Some-what	For the Most Part	Fully
District leaders and staff are committed to building an open and ongoing dialogue with media.	° The district makes it a point to develop a relationship (rather than simply send out press releases) with key media representatives. ° The district works out an agreement with the local paper to spotlight a successful school every week.				
Ideas for Developing Social Capital					

ACTION TOOL 5: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Directions: Rate the degree of structure the district has in place to prioritize spending and support schools in understanding and obtaining funds for CSR.

Does the district have structures and processes in place to...	Not at All	Some-what	For the Most Part	Fully	Notes
Prioritize budget allocations in a way that is consistent with its mission?					
Measure the impact of spending to determine if funds are used effectively?					
Create an investment fund that can be used to pay for CSR start-up costs?					
Help schools understand how current sources could be reallocated?					
Help schools find additional sources of funding?					
Help schools write grants					
Ensure schools have full information and understanding of the budget process?					
Ensure other stakeholders have full information and understanding of the budget process?					

ACTION TOOL 6: COST PLANNING

Directions: Use this tool to estimate how much adopting CSR models in a certain number of schools will cost on an annual basis, outline potential annual resources, and calculate the difference between estimated costs and estimated resources. The tool is intended only as a way of finding very rough approximations in that there are a number of "unknown" factors that can only be calculated once concrete decisions (e.g., determining the exact number of schools that will be using each particular model) have been made.

CSR Model (Direct costs)	**Avg. cost in Year ___ incurred by a similar school as quoted by model developer OR estimated cost in Year ___ of this homegrown model**	**Number of schools expected to use this model**	**Estimated Subtotal ($) (Column 2 X Column 3)**
			Estimated Total of CSR Model Cost for Year ____:

Costs Associated with Incorporating CSR	Estimated Subtotal ($)
Establishing a CSR liaison	
Establishing CSR model liaisons	
Training district staff in CSR models	
Creating new professional development opportunities focused on CSR	
Providing information to schools about CSR options (e.g., design fair)	
Informing community about CSR	
District costs for CSR	
	Estimated Total for Year _____:

Potential New Funds: Source	Potential New Funds: Amount
	Estimated Total for Year _____:

Potential Total Funds for Year ___ (add "reallocated funds" to "new funds")	Potential Total Costs of CSR for Year ___ (add "model costs" to "associated costs")	Difference between Columns 1 and 2

ACTION TOOL 7:
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COST MAPPING

Directions: The table on the following, which is based on Karen Hawley Miles' work[1] with the New American Schools Professional Development Spending Project, outlines categories that districts can use to code their professional development spending. Following is an example of how to use the table (a blank table is included on page 34):

Each school in the district receives funding from a state bilingual education program. One school spends $1,000 of this funding on registration fees for several teachers to attend a conference on bilingual education. That expense would be coded as follows:

Amount Spent: $1,000

Subject Area: Bilingual education

Type of Activity: Conference/seminar

Type of Participant: Regular classroom teachers only

Funding Source: State bilingual education funds

Funding Control: School control with some district/zone restrictions

Funding Object: Registration fees

By coding budget expenditures, the district can determine, for example, how much money (and what percentage of the total budget) is devoted to professional development for instructional methods, regular classroom teachers, one-day workshops versus ongoing activities, and so on. Coding spending by multiple categories also allows more detailed analysis. For example, a district will be able to determine how much money is spent on professional development related to classroom management and of that amount, how much is spent on one-day workshops.

The categories and classifications are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to provide the groundwork for each district's particular coding strategy.

[1]Miles, K. H. (1999). *Making time for transforming teaching: The district role.* Arlington, VA: New American Schools.

Amount Spent	Subject Area	Type of Activity	Type of Participant	Funding Source	Funding Control	Funding Object
	• Accountability and standards • Bilingual education • Classroom mgmt. • CSR • Curriculum (can break down further into specific subject areas) • Data analysis and evaluation • Health and nutrition • Instructional methods • Leadership • Liability issues • Mentoring • Multiculturalism • Parent involvement • Safety/ discipline • Student assessment • Student counseling/ conflict resolution • School governance • Teacher test prep (e.g., for National Board Certification) • Technology • Working with students with special needs (can break down by type) • Other	• Conference/ seminar • Workshop/ hands-on training of one day or less • Workshop/ hands-on training of two to five days • Workshop/ hands-on training of six or more days • Class lasting a college quarter or more • Ongoing (e.g., common planning time, classroom coaching, peer networking, study groups, etc.) • Consultant services • Site visits to other schools • Other	• Regular classroom teachers only • Special subject teachers (art, music, media, computer) only • Specialists (e.g., reading specialists) • Support team (e.g., counselors, nurses) only • Instructional aides only • Volunteers only • Administrators only • All instructional personnel • All instructional personnel and administrators • All school staff • Other	• Federal • CSR • Even Start Family Literacy Program • Goals 2000 • IDEA • School-to-Work Opportunities Program • Title I • Title II, Eisenhower PD Strategies • Title IV, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities • Title VI, Innovative Education Program Strategies • Title VII, Bilingual Education • Technology Literacy Challenge Fund • Other	• State (can break down further by program) • Local • Private • Other • Complete central/zone office control • Central/zone office control with school input • School control with some district/zone restrictions • Complete school control • Individual recipient control • Other	• Registration fees • Tuition • Materials • Supplies and equipment • Travel • Lodging • Meals • Salaries • Participant stipends • Substitute wages • PD days (includes salary and other contractual daily costs associated with PD) • PD hours (includes salary and other contractual hourly costs associated with PD) • Consultant fees • Other

Amount Spent	Subject Area	Type of Activity	Type of Participant	Funding Source	Funding Control	Funding Object

BUILDING SUPPORT

Public engagement is...not just a matter of getting a lot of people together in a meeting. It's where the community and the school district actually hear each other. We're afraid that people will get emotional and angry, when they already are both those things.—community member Medina, OH[1]

Informing stakeholders about the comprehensive reform strategy is essential for at least two reasons:

1. As with any reform in any sector, relying on a core person or group to lead a particular change often results in the disintegration or elimination of the reform once that person or group leaves. To decrease the possibility of this happening to the CSR approach, the district office must strive to inform and build support among the school board, schools, businesses, the teachers' union, parents, and the community. Only a broad network of support will ensure that the CSR approach has a chance of continuing over the long term.
2. By frequently and consistently communicating the district's plans about its proposed improvement ideas, the central office will build trust among educators and will demonstrate that it is serious about its commitment to the reform.

Building Support at a glance

- Create a communication plan.
- Maintain an ongoing dialogue with the school board and other community leaders.
- Enlist potential collaboration partners.

Action Step: ***Create a communication plan.***

To ensure that all stakeholders are well informed about your district's proposed strategy, it is important to create an overall plan for how communication will take place. The first step is to identify *who* the stakeholders are in the community. Your district can obtain this information from existing surveys of the community's demographics, political environment, and economic base. If those aren't complete, the district can conduct its own survey. Once the district has identified its main stakeholder groups and their basic characteristics, it can begin to decide *how* it should communicate with them. For each stakeholder group, the district should begin by asking itself:

- What are the best means of communicating with this group?
- Should people be appointed at the school and or district level to communicate specifically with this group?
- What are the best ways of soliciting input from this group?
- What particular information would this group want or need to know?

Some districts use professional public relations firms to communicate with their stakeholders. This choice will vary by district, but whether the district chooses to hire a firm or do it itself, the need to build and use a strong communication plan cannot be overemphasized. Ongoing dialogue with stakeholders will allow your district to take into consideration various perspectives during decision making, help gain the support and trust of a skeptical public, and increase the chances that CSR will continue beyond the tenure of one superintendent. **Action Tools 8: Building a**

Communications Plan and **Action Tools 9: Communication Log** can help jumpstart this process.

Action Step: *Maintain an ongoing dialogue with the school board and other community leaders.*

Keeping all stakeholders informed of school and district operations and decisions is vital to communitywide support. The previous action step provided ideas your district can use to create a general communication plan. This action step targets two particular stakeholder groups: the school board and community leaders.

School board

Open and ongoing communication between the district and the school board is essential. Comprehensive school reform will require a number of difficult decisions to be made concerning resource priorities, accountability, waivers, and so on. The school board, as the local education policymaking body, needs to be fully aware of what the CSR approach entails so it can make the best policy decisions. If the board is unaware of the time, effort, and resources required, its needed support will likely wane as political realities pressure it to produce immediate improvements in student achievement. The board needs to realize and support the fact that CSR is not a program, it is a new and ongoing way of operating the public school system and will require time. Given the board's importance in continuing CSR, special efforts should be made to ensure board understanding and promotion of CSR restructuring and "reculturing."

Other community leaders

Elected officials at the state and local levels, business leaders, civic leaders, union leaders, and media representatives all have influence that can affect the funding and support of school and district programs and services. Regular two-way communication with these groups and dedicated staff time for handling this communication allow the district to get needed resource and constituent support and to be proactive rather than reactive during district crises.

Action Step: *Enlist potential collaboration partners.*

Public schools have a large part to play within society and as such they should be linked to the other public and private institutions that create the social fabric of people's daily lives. This interconnection with other organizations is especially important to your district's support of CSR, since comprehensive school reform relies upon the role of the whole community in improving education. **Action Tool 10: Partnership Preplanning** can aid your district in brainstorming potential partnerships. Some of the partners you want to consider include:

- ***Institutions providing technical support and/or helpful publications.*** There are a number of organizations from which districts can seek technical support, including state departments of education, the

country's 10 regional educational laboratories and 15 comprehensive assistance centers, and the U.S. Department of Education. See the Resource listed on page 38.

- ***Institutions offering resource support.*** School districts may seek financial and other resource support from foundations and businesses. Carefully consider any conditions attached to contributions to ensure that the district's mission and goals are not subverted to the contributor's demands. Keep in mind that business partnerships seem to work best when they truly are "partnerships," not sponsorships. Schools do have something to offer businesses. They can gain such diverse benefits as representation in school decision making and improved public relations. Businesses stand to gain in the future with the research-based models of CSR if today's students become tomorrow's better-prepared employees.
- ***Institutions supplying shared learning and moral support.*** Another type of partnership involves one of shared learning with other districts and with area colleges and universities. Forging a relationship with districts that are also engaged in CSR provides an opportunity to learn from the experiences of others and to give and take moral support from people who are undergoing the same challenges. Forming a connection with a college or university offers at least two benefits. First, schools can tap into a source of volunteers and student teachers who can provide assistance in the classroom. Second, both "sides" of this partnership have something to learn. Schools can benefit from the research that is coming out of colleges and universities. In turn, college and university teaching professors can learn what is needed in today's K-12 classroom and thus better prepare tomorrow's teachers. CSR demands new management, data analysis, and collaboration skills. Given the number of new teachers entering schools in the next ten years, it will be much preferable to train teachers in needed skills before they get to the classroom.

Endnote

[1]*Reasons for hope, voices for change: A report of the Annenberg Institute on public engagement for public education.* (n.d.). Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

Resources for Building Support

Reasons for hope, voices for change: A report of the Annenberg Institute on public engagement for public education. (n.d.). Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform. For ordering information, see www.aisr.brown.edu/html/publications/pubreports.html#reasons

Engaging the Public: Five communication guidelines for educators. (n.d.). A Plus Communications. [Online]. Available: www.apluscommunications.com/aplus/products/9607b.html.

Building Community Support for Schools. (2000). Education Commission of the States. See www.ecs.org for ordering information

How to Build Support for comprehensive school reform. (n.d.). New American Schools. See www.naschools.org to access the "How-to" series.

Resources for Organizations Providing Technical Assistance and/or Helpful Publications Concerning CSR

U.S. *Department of Education.* www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/index.html

Regional Educational Laboratories

Appalachia Educational Laboratory. www.ael.org
1-800-624-9120
Serving Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Laboratory For Student Success. www.temple.edu/LSS/csr.htm
1-800-892-5550
Serving Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C.

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning. www.mcrel.org/csrd
(303) 337-0990
Serving Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. www.ncrel.org/csri
1-800-356-2735
Serving Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University. www.lab.brown.edu
1-800-521-9550
Serving Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. www.nwrel.org/csrdp/index.htm
(503) 275-9500
Serving Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington.

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning. www.prel.org/programs/csrdp/csrd.html
(808) 441-1300
Serving American Samoa; the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; the States of Micronesia: Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap; Guam, Hawaii, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education. www.serve.org/csrd
1-800-755-3277
Serving Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. www.sedl.org/csrd/welcome.html
1-800-476-6861
Serving Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

WestEd. www.wested.org/csrd/welcome.html
(415) 565-3000
Serving Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah.

Regional Comprehensive Centers

See www.wested.org/cc/html/centers.htm for contact information on the regional comprehensive center that serves your district.

Other Organizations' Web sites

American Association of School Administrators. www.aasa.org

American Federation of Teachers. www.aft.org

Consortium for Policy Research in Education. www.upenn.edu/gse/cpre

Education Commission of the States. www.ecs.org.

Education Research Service. www.ers.org

New American Schools. www.naschools.org

National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform. www.goodschools.gwu.edu

National Education Association. www.nea.org.

Action Questions: Building Support

- How will the district gather the necessary data to identify all of its stakeholders and the stakeholder characteristics that determine how the district communicates with them? Who (department, team, and so on) will take the lead responsibility for developing, maintaining, and evaluating this database?
- What measures should the district take to ensure that all stakeholders have input into decision making?
- How will the district "market" all the good things happening in the district?
- Will the district employ an independent public relations firm to help it build support for schools in the community?
- What institutions and/or associations could the district enlist to provide technical assistance?
- What businesses could the district enlist to provide resource support?
- What foundations could the district enlist to provide resource support?

ACTION TOOL 8:
BUILDING A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

One of the most overlooked steps in implementing comprehensive school reform is communications and public engagement. Your efforts to improve student achievement will have more staying power if they are supported and understood by parents, community members, and other key leaders. This tool is adapted from *Building Community Support for Schools*, an Education Commission of the States document. The step-by-step chart outlined below will help you get started in focusing your communications efforts and engaging parents and community members in this important work. The chart should be adapted to fit your district's needs.

Directions: For each key step, read the questions to consider and then identify the status of your district's communication plan efforts; e.g., if your district is in the planning stage, insert a "P." Next, list the person(s) responsible and then note the initial steps your district has taken. Finally, on the last page, brainstorm and jot down ideas for building and executing your communication plan.

Key Steps for an Effective Communication Plan	Questions to Consider	Status: Planning Stage (P), Begun (B), In Process (IP), Completed (C)	Person(s) Responsible	Initial Steps Taken
1. Set specific communication.	• What do you want people to know and do? • What do these people want you to know and do? • How will you know whether your efforts are successful?			
2. Listen to what people want.	• Do you know what various segments of the public think about the schools? • Do you know what the internal staff thinks about the schools? • How do the views of the public and internal staff differ? How wide is the gap in perception? • What evidence would parents, community members, teachers, principals, and other constituencies need to see to know schools have improved? • How will you adjust your plan based on what you have heard?			
3. Set priorities.	• Given the level of resources, what do you need to do first, second, third? • What can be done that creates momentum or a sense of urgency? • What are longer-term goals?			
4. Pinpoint whom you need to engage.	• Which people inside and outside the school system do you need to reach to be successful? (Who are your stakeholders?) • Who are your supporters? • Who are your detractors?			

Source: Arnsparger, A., Kernan-Schloss, A., Plattner, A., & Soholt, S. (1997). *Building community support for schools: A practical guide to strategic communication*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Reprinted by permission.

Key Steps for an Effective Communication Plan	Questions to Consider	Status: Planning Stage (P), Begun (B), In Process (IP), Completed (C)	Person(s) Responsible	Initial Steps Taken
6. Identify what you want to say.	• What messages do you send to the public now? • What messages do you want to send? • Which messages are working and why? Who are they reaching? • How will you create new messages?			
6. Use plain language.	• Are you using educational jargon? • Are your messages straightforward, so nonexperts can easily understand them? How do you know?			
7. Identify the most effective communicators.	• Within each stakeholder group, who are effective and credible communicators?			
8. Show student work.	• Is student work displayed in schools and in the district administration building? • Is student work displayed in other public buildings and gathering places (e.g., libraries, community centers, local businesses)? • How does this student work illustrate what is expected of students? • In what ways does this student work illustrate student growth from one year to the next?			
9. Design opportunities to communicate and engage.	• Which forums and formats are best at connecting to each audience? • Which mechanisms are in use now? • What might you need to do differently?			
10. Produce materials.	• What materials will help you to clearly communicate with the people you most need to reach? • How do you document the successes you have now? • How can you use new technologies to reach more people or send a stronger message? • How will you communicate with parents and community members who speak a language other than English? • In what ways can you use community and business groups to help you communicate your message, event, or reform effort?			
11. Get the resources right.	• What financial resources are now used for communication and public engagement? • What other resources are available within the district? • Where might you go for additional resources?			

Key Steps for an Effective Communication Plan	Questions to Consider	Status: Planning Stage (P), Begun (B), In Process (IP), Completed (C)	Person(s) Responsible	Initial Steps Taken
12. Implement the plan.	• Plan, do, act, check: Are you doing what you said you would do?			
13. Evaluate and adjust the plan.	• What measures will you use to indicate success? • How often will you evaluate formatively and summatively?			

Ideas for Building and Executing Your Communications Plan

ACTION TOOL 9: COMMUNICATION LOG

This tool is taken from the new NCREL guide, *Beyond the Bell: A Tool Kit for Creating Effective After-School Programs*. You may use it to keep track of communication efforts with stakeholders. It may be duplicated as needed. Each of the categories is explained below.

Directions:

Date: Enter the date that the communication is conveyed.

Person/Organization: Enter the person or organization that is the target audience for the communication.

Content/Format of Communication: Enter the basic content and format of the communication (e.g., information about the holiday schedule—online newsletter; thank-you letter for making brownies for bake sale—letter; fundraising ad—radio spot).

Objective of Communication: Here enter what the program hopes to achieve with the communication. This should heavily influence how the message is crafted. Possible examples of objectives include:

- To inform or educate
- To persuade
- To promote
- To ask for help or participation
- To demonstrate appreciation
- To elicit feedback
- To gain compliance
- To offer advice or guidance
- To respond to inquiry

Result of Communication: If possible, enter how the target group responded as a result of the communication. This category is included to emphasize that "outcomes" of communication should be assessed to the extent possible. Keep in mind that it is not really possible to attribute an outcome directly to one factor (such as communication) given the existence of many other potentially contributing factors. Specifically, try to think of indicators that would suggest if the communication objective has been achieved. Examples include:

- Attendance levels at meetings
- Number of new volunteers
- Number of returned surveys
- Greater adherence to a particular policy
- More cordial relationship
- Positive feedback from recipients

Recipient Feedback: If applicable, enter any feedback the program receives about the communication. This can include any comments or suggestions about the content, format, delivery, or frequency—anything that can help improve the message the next time.

Date	Person/ Organization	Content and Format of Communication	Objective of Communication	Result of Communication	Feedback From Those Receiving/ Participating in Communication

ACTION TOOL 10:
PARTNERSHIP PREPLANNING

Directions: This tool may be used to brainstorm about organizations with which the district may want to establish a relationship. Record, for each organization, the potential resource opportunities, partnership stipulations, partnership incentives, and the name of the person or group responsible for initiating and maintaining the relationship.

Potential partnership organizations	What particular resources could this partner or sponsor offer?	What stipulations would this partner or sponsor likely ask for?	What reasons or benefits could we use to convince this partner or sponsor to enter into a relationship?	What person or group should be responsible for initiating or maintaining a relationship with this partner or sponsor?
Government or non-profit organizations able to provide technical assistance				
Organization:				
Organization:				
Organization:				
Businesses or foundations willing to provide resource support				
Organization:				
Organization:				
Organization:				
Community organizations willing to provide resource support				
Organization:				
Organization:				
Organization:				

Potential partnership organizations	What particular resources could this partner or sponsor offer?	What stipulations would this partner or sponsor likely ask for?	What reasons or benefits could we use to convince this partner or sponsor to enter into a relationship?	What person or group should be responsible for initiating or maintaining a relationship with this partner or sponsor?
Unions and/or other teacher organizations				
Organization:				
Organization:				
Organization:				
Other districts with which to share information and moral support				
District:				
District:				
District:				
Research and evaluation collaboratives				
College/university:				
College/university:				
College/university:				

FACILITATING INFORMED CHOICE

In the past, decisions were based on what we thought or felt—not on data and research. This is one of the most phenomenal changes we have seen in our district. - District-level staff member, Clover Park District [1]

Once the district has outlined its basic CSR strategy and has begun building awareness and support among stakeholders, it's time to help schools as they begin the actual process of choosing and implementing CSR models. Thousands of schools across the country have implemented CSR models and, consequently, a good deal has been learned about common challenges for schools as they design their approaches. The following actions address these challenges.

Action Step: ***Help schools assess their needs and develop CSR approaches.***

Before each school selects an external model to adopt, it must lay the groundwork in two ways: first, by conducting a comprehensive needs assessment and second (based on the results of its needs assessment), by designing a comprehensive school reform approach—a broad-based plan for transforming the school to meet the needs of its students. The needs assessment and CSR approach become the basis for selecting external models to adopt and for evaluating the progress of reform over time. Assessing school needs and developing a CSR approach are the subject of NCREL's publication: *Making Good Choices: A Guide for Schools and Districts.*

Assessing needs and fashioning a CSR approach are activities best carried out at the school level, but there are ways your district can help make your schools' work more effective:

- ***Provide a framework for school-level needs assessments.*** Though each school can conduct its own needs assessment, your district can help by providing a framework or template for schools to use in the process. The framework can help ensure that schools are asking the right questions about their strengths and challenges. For example, the needs assessment would focus on providing "actionable" data, such as discovering that a school has low reading comprehension scores among bilingual male students in the third grade. That type of data provides the school with a specific target for its actions and allows for easier resource prioritizing. Many districts already have templates in place for needs assessment as part of school improvement planning or other processes.
- ***Provide data and research.*** District computers and paper files often hold reams of data about the district's schools and students. Making this information available to schools in an accessible, user-friendly form can aid immensely in the needs assessment process. In addition, district offices are repositories of information about research findings and best practices in teaching and learning. Effectively packaging this information ensures that schools have access to cutting-edge thinking when they make decisions about their comprehensive school reform approaches.

Facilitating Informed Choice at a glance

- Help schools assess their needs and develop CSR approaches.
- Provide information, assistance, and concrete tools to guide schools in choosing models.
- Provide choice among models, and require accountability.
- Provide assistance to schools in working with model providers.
- Provide a timeline for selecting model and beginning implementation.

- ***Provide training in data use and decision making.*** Teachers may not have the skills to perform the sort of complex analysis required by a needs assessment. Your district staff can help by providing hands-on training for school staff in how to analyze data and use research to improve practice. In addition, schools may require help in using the results of their needs assessment to craft their CSR approaches. Teachers and other school staff may not have much experience in these areas and may benefit from hands-on training. NCREL's *Making Good Choices: Comprehensive School Reform: A Guide for Schools and Districts* offers some suggestions on how to use a school's needs assessment to create a comprehensive school reform approach.
- ***Eliminate unnecessary duplication.*** Often schools are required to develop plans for school improvement, technology, professional development, school safety, Title I, and so on. Districts may also ask schools to complete applications for grant programs such as CSRD. Many of these plans ask for the same data or descriptions of school programs and strategies. Asking schools to complete numerous documents that supply basically the same information keeps schools from attending to more important matters. Districts can help diminish this problem by condensing information requests to one form if at all possible.

Resources for Performing School Needs Assessment

Bernhardt, V. (1998). *Data analysis for comprehensive schoolwide improvement*, Eyes on Education. For a description see http://www.eyeoneducation.com/systemic.html#dacsi

Levesque, K. (Ed.), Ross, K., Bradley, D., & Teitelbaum, P. (1998). *At your fingertips: Using everyday data to improve schools*, MPR Associates. For a description, see http://www.mprinc.com/html/resources/ayf_brochure_main.htm

Making good choices: A guide for schools and districts. (1998). North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. [Online]. Available: www.ncrel.org/csri/tools/makegood.pdf

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (1998).

Assessment of school readiness [Online]. Available: www.nwrel.org/csrdp/readiness.pdf

School CSR self-assessment tool [Online]. Available: www.nwrel.org/csrd

Questions for self-study: Assessing our school's professional learning community [Online]. Available: www.nwrel.org/scpd/natspec/questions.pdf

Pathways to School Improvement. [Web site]. North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, www.ncrel.org/sdrs/pathwayg.htm

Action Step: ***Provide information, assistance, and concrete tools to guide schools in choosing models.***

After a school has performed a needs assessment, it can then find the educational model that most closely supports its needs and goals. However, CSR models are complex and the schools will need as much assistance as possible in choosing an appropriate model and in understanding all the implications of adoption. Your district can help by:

- ***Distributing information.*** One simple means of educating school staff is to distribute a sampling of the multiple articles, Web sites, videos, and so on, available about different educational models. Your district staff should also become familiar with the general principals and vocabulary of CSR models so they are prepared to answer the many questions school personnel will have as they select models.

- ***Encouraging school visitation.*** Most schools choose models based on referrals from other schools or from direct marketing by model developers. Seeing the model in action offers a more concrete way of understanding how the reform really works. By visiting schools with demographics similar to their own, model-adopting schools can see what implementation will mean for their daily experience. In addition, they can ask questions of consumers rather than sellers of a particular model.

  Your district can encourage school visitation by providing money and release time for travel to the schools and/or funding for substitutes. It can also help schools make the most of their site visits by advising them on proven site visit techniques. The American Federation of Teacher's *Seeing Progress: A Guide to Visiting Schools Using Promising Programs* (see Resources box on page 53) offers some useful ideas for school visits.

- ***Using model fairs.*** Many districts also choose to host or send school and district staff to model fairs. These fairs allow school and district personnel to become more familiar with potential CSR models through presentations and the opportunity to interact with model providers. Educational Research Service's *Blueprints for School Success: A Guide to New American Schools Designs* (see Resources box on page 53) includes helpful tips and samples of agendas for design fairs. A few of the key factors for a successful fair include the following:

  - District leadership should promote and attend the fair to demonstrate the district's commitment to this type of reform.
  - Schools should be given information on the models ahead of time and be asked to sign up in advance for the sessions on their top choices.
  - Sessions should last at least ninety minutes to give model developers the chance to present their models more extensively and answer questions.

Some districts also choose to invite model developers to a school or cluster of schools to allow for more personalized, hands-on interaction that gives the schools and the model providers an opportunity to assess whether they would be a good match. **Action Tool 11: Planning** and **Running a CSR Model Fair** provides a template to plan and implement a model fair.

- ***Creating a comparison matrix.*** Your districts could create a matrix showing how particular models match with the district and state goals. Given the great deal of confusion over how to align model components with district goals and accountability requirements, such a tool would prove very valuable for schools.
- ***Providing training in analysis skills.*** The incorporation of a CSR strategy, with its reliance on site-based decision making, will require schools to become more informed consumers of educational products. Your district could provide some basic training in understanding both quantitative and qualitative data. Without this training, schools will be forced to rely on model claims and how they "feel" about the model's philosophy, rather than analyzing the research on the effectiveness of the model. Though agreeing with the basic philosophy of the educational model is important, it should not serve as the sole criterion in deciding on a model.
- ***Providing clear information and tools describing model cost and funding sources.*** With all of the complications inherent in calculating costs, your district can help by providing tools to project costs for particular schools using particular models. The U.S. Department of Education's *Guide to Working with Model Providers* (see Resources box on page 54) contains a tool that can help schools and districts do just that.

  Additionally, schools also need to understand sources of funding. Some schools implement CSR models under the impression that the district will provide funding for support, only to discover that the schools themselves are expected to assume the costs. If schools will be expected to reallocate their own funding and/or will only receive special grants or district funds for a certain amount of time, the district should communicate this expectation clearly.
- ***Using the* CSRD *Program as a catalyst for* CSR.** The federal CSRD grant competition provides a minimum of $50,000 annually per grant-winning school and thus offers a good source of possible start-up funds for comprehensive school reform. The grant process requires local education agencies to demonstrate how their chosen models will be effective in their schools, not simply that the model has been effective in the past. Therefore, schools may need help in writing a winning application.

  Some potential ways your district can assist schools include:
  - Providing schools with consultants
  - Offering a rubric for a successful application
  - Hosting workshops
  - Working with schools to improve their unsuccessful proposals

Resources for Selecting an Appropriate CSR Model

Achieving Student Success. (n.d.). [interactive online tool]. Lab for Student Success. [Online]. Available: www.reformhandbook-LSS.org

Blueprints for school success: A guide to New American Schools design. (1988). Arlington, VA: New American Schools Development Corp., Educational Research Service.

Catalog of school reform models. (n.d.). Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. [Online]. Available: www.nwrel.org/scpd/natspec/catalog

An educator's guide to school reform. (n.d.). American Institutes for Research. [Online]. Available: www.aasa.org/Reform/index.htm

Olatokunbo, F., & Slavin, R. (1998, January). Schoolwide reform models: What works? *Phi Delta Kappan* [Online]. Available: www.pdkintl.org/kappan/ksla9801.htm

Herman, R., & Stringfield, S. (1997). *Ten promising programs for educating all children: Evidence of impact.* Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.

Making good choices: A guide for schools and districts. (1998). North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. [Online]. Available: www.ncrel.org/csri/tools/makegood.pdf

Seeing progress: A guide to visiting schools using promising programs. (n.d.). American Federation of Teachers. [Online]. Available: www.aft.org/edissues/rsa/guide/change/seeing.pdf

Wang, M., Haertel, G., & Walberg, H. (1997). *What do we know: Widely implemented school improvement programs.* Laboratory for Student Success. www.temple.edu/LSS/widely.pdf

Action Step: ***Provide choice among models, and require accountability.***

As presented in the Strategizing component, districts will vary as to how much choice they will allow their schools in selecting CSR models. However, allowing at least *some* choice is necessary for successful implementation. Rand's[1] evaluation of the New American Schools project demonstrates that schools that are forced to implement a certain model will not display the support and commitment an educational model needs to be successful. Your district can give each of your schools the autonomy to select a research-based model that the school feels is the best for its own particular circumstances and demographics.

Giving your schools the autonomy to select a model needs to be balanced with a requirement of accountability. Your district can ask schools to demonstrate that the models they have chosen will help them meet their goals. Doing so is a good way of helping schools make the best possible match and gain real improvement in student achievement.

Action Step: ***Provide assistance to schools in working with model providers.***

Your district can play a vital role in facilitating the work between schools and model developers in the selection and initial implementation process. District support is needed because:

- Schools may be inexperienced in asking probing questions of model providers and resolving issues related to the alignment of models with district standards.

Endnotes

1. Davis, D., Sagmiller, K., & Hagans. R. (1999). *Implementing school reform models: The Clover Park experience.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. [Online]. Available: www.nwrel.org/csrdp/clover.html
2. Glennan, T. (1998). *New American schools after six years.* Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp.

- Model providers may need assistance in gaining complete information about a school to make a good match and in understanding how to maneuver through the administrative and other requirements of the district.
- A district may gain cost savings by negotiating multischool contracts with certain model providers.
- Schools may need to gain waivers from certain district or other policies in order to fully implement their chosen CSR model.

Many districts have established a district coordinator position to help schools and model providers work together. This position becomes more important during actual implementation, but even in the selection process, a district liaison can help bridge the gap between the inexperience of schools and the model provider's lack of familiarity with the school/district. The creation of a district coordinator for CSR models should not take the place of preparing all district staff members to work within the context of CSR. If schools see that only a few people within the district office can assist them, they will think of CSR as a special program, not a districtwide comprehensive strategy.

Resources for Working With Model Providers

Education Commission of the States.

Comprehensive school reform: Identifying effective models

Comprehensive school reform: Criteria and questions; Selecting school reform models: A reference guide for state.[Online]. Available: *www.ecs.org*

U.S. Department of Education. *Guide to working with model providers.* [Online]. Available:www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform/model.pdf

Action Step: ***Provide a timeline for selecting models and beginning implementation.***

One aspect of keeping schools well informed is giving them a timeline—a guide for tracking when they are expected to do what and for deciding if they are adequately prepared to take the next steps. Schools that establish a timeline often have that added push to stay on track or accelerate their efforts. A sample timeline (based on that of Cincinnati Public Schools) and blank template to record your district's timelines are included in **Action Tool 12: Sample Implementation Timeline.**

Action Questions: Facilitating Informed Choice

- What is the district's proposed timeline for pursuing CSR?
- How will the district ensure that its framework for school needs assessments will facilitate specific, "actionable" targets for improvement?
- What structures and processes could the district adopt to ensure that schools have access to the research and data they need while determining their CSR strategy? Who (department, team, etc.) would take lead responsibility for providing this research/data?
- What structures and processes could the district use to ensure that all teachers are prepared to use data and make difficult decisions? Who (department, team, etc.) would take lead responsibility for preparing teachers with these new skills?
- What measures could the district take to eliminate unnecessary duplication in the forms the school has to fill out during the school improvement process?
- What methods could the district employ to support schools during the model selection process? What structures and processes could the district establish to provide this support and who (department, team, etc.) would be responsible for providing it?
    - Distributing information
    - Encouraging visitation of other schools using model
    - Using model fairs
    - Creating a comparison matrix between model components and district goals
    - Providing training in analysis skills
    - Providing clear information and tools describing model cost and funding sources
    - Using CSRD Program as a catalyst for CSR
- What structures and processes could the district establish to ensure that frequent, ongoing, and open communication occurs between the school, the district, and the model provider? Who (department, team, etc.) would take lead responsibility for facilitating this communication?
- What structures and processes could the district establish to ensure that model providers understand district standards, requirements, values, etc? Who (department, team, etc.) would take lead responsibility for this undertaking?
- What structures and processes could the district establish to ensure that all contracts made between a school and a model provider address all of the district's legal concerns? Who (department, team, etc.) would take lead responsibility for this?

ACTION TOOL 11:
PLANNING AND RUNNING A CSR MODEL FAIR

Directions: This template may be used to help the district (or state) coordinate a successful fair of CSR models. The first table presents several tips (which are borrowed from *Blueprints for School Success: A Guide to New American School Designs*) for planning the fair and a list of actions that flow from each tip. The district may choose not to embark on all the listed actions or may choose others. The first table also provides space to record the person/group responsible for each action, the method or source used to perform the action, and the date the action is completed. The method or source used column, though not applicable to all the actions, will allow the district to record resources and information (e.g., location used for fair, methods used to invite participants) so that it may refer back to them when planning fairs in future years. The district may even choose to attach resources (e.g., reference lists, forms) to this guide for convenient use in upcoming years. The second table (also based on the NAS Blueprints document) provides a checklist of actions to complete during the fair. Again, districts may choose not to take each action, but experience has demonstrated that these suggestions have proven successful in the past.

CSR Model Fair for the Year _____.

Planning the Fair

	Person/Group Responsible	Method/Source Used (if applicable)	Date Completed (if applicable)
Tip: Invite a broad range of leaders.			
Action: Invite district, school, community, parent, and business leaders.			
Action: Plan the fair at a time that is convenient for participants.			
Action: Choose a fair location that is convenient and large enough for all participants and that meets the needs of the model representatives.			
Action:			
Tip: Disseminate detailed information about the models prior to the fair.			
Action: Provide potential participants with printed information about each of the models represented at the fair.			
Action: Provide a reference list of other publications, Web sites, etc., that participants might look at before attending the fair.			
Action: Provide a list of questions that participants might use in talking with model representatives.			
Action: Actively encourage school personnel to meet together to discuss models before attending the fair.			
Action (Other?):			

Source: *Blueprints for school success: A guide to New American Schools design.* (1988). Arlington, VA: New American Schools Development Corp., Educational Research Service. This information was developed and is copyrighted by New American Schools. It is reprinted here by permission. To find out more about New American Schools, visit their Web site at www.newamericanschools.org.

	Person/Group Responsible	Method/Source Used (if applicable)	Date Completed (if applicable)
Tip: *Disseminate detailed* RSVP *forms.*			
Action: Ask for the number of participants coming from each school, business, etc., as well as for each participant's contact information, position and years with the organization (if applicable), and special needs requests.			
Action: Ask each participant or group of participants to preregister for breakout sessions of particular models and ask them to come prepared to ask questions of and talk with model representatives.			
Action: Send all partricipants relevant logistical information, including time, date, place, directions, parking, and whether or not meals are provided.			
Action (other?):			
Tip: *Distribute information to model representatives.*			
Action: Send participant information to the model representatives so that they may gear their presentation to the audience.			
Action: Send the model representatives information about the district/state so they can tailor their presentations to fit the unique needs of the district/state.			
Action: If the district/state provides reimbursement, send expense forms to model representatives prior to the fair so they may record their travel, lodging, and food expenses, and understand any district/state limits on reimbursement.			
Action: Provide information about local accommodations, directions to the fair site, and any other logistical information that model representatives might need.			
Action: Send a materials request form to model representatives so that they may note what AV equipment, supplies, etc., they will need for their presentation.			
Action: (Other?):			

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Running the Fair

Action	Person/Group Responsible (if applicable)	Check When Completed
Provide each team with its own breakout room.		
Ensure that all teams have the equipment they requested and that it is in working order prior to the start of the fair.		
Begin the fair with an opening presentation that explains why and how the district/state will support comprehensive school reform. (Using district/state leaders for these presentations will lend credence to the claim of district/state support.)		
Have a principal or other school leader give a presentation about how a model provider is working in the school.		
Have all model teams present at least twice during the day with each session lasting at least ninety minutes.		
Include time for participants to talk informally with model representatives. They will then be able to ask specific questions and get a better "feel" for the models.		
Distribute written information to participants about the next steps in adopting a CSR model, relevant grant or other requirements, and contact information for the person or group in the district or state office responsible for comprehensive school reform.		
Distribute written contact information for each model to the participants.		
Offer a brief concluding session in which participants are asked to fill out an evaluation form of the fair. (Completion rates are higher when participants complete the evaluation while on-site rather than taking it home.)		
As soon as possible after the fair, provide model representatives with a list of participants, along with their contact information.		

ACTION TOOL: 12
SAMPLE IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Directions: This sample timeline, based on one from Cincinnati Public Schools, shows the time allotted for action steps prior to CSR implementation in the school, the due dates, and the action steps to be taken. This example may be modified since some of the action steps may not be applicable in your district (see blank timeline).

Months ahead of school start	Due Date	Action Steps
1 year out	September	Conduct checklist for pursuing implementation from potential schools.
1 year out	September	Complete school site self-assessment (district created document).
1 year-11 months out	September-October	School teams discuss print material, view videos of model providers.
1 year-11 months out	September-October	Share information and assist in reallocating resources.
1 year-10 months out	September-November	Gather data for Venture Capital Grant from schools (if possible and applicable).
11 months out	October 10	School teams sign up for model provider fair and for one or two models visits.
11 months out	October 15	School leadership teams attend model provider fair.
11-8 months out	October 16-January 29	School teams share and discuss information with faculty, parents, and community; arrange for site visits within district as appropriate; and invite the model provider to speak to staff.
8 months out	January 29	Letter of Intent for a specific model sent to district administration.
8 months out	January 30- 31	District reviews Letters of Intent.
7 months out	February 2	Selection completed for schools designated for CSR.
6 months out	March	Award Venture Capital Grants to schools (if possible and applicable).
6 months out	March	Submit Title I plan application (if applicable).
6-4 months out	March-June	Begin planning with model providers.
4-1 month out	June or August	School staff attend five days of mandatory training and mentorship, and continue planning for implementation
	August-September	School starts CSR with model provider.

Source: Cincinnati Public Schools, Ohio. Adapted by permission.

Months ahead of school start	Due Date	Action Steps

FORGING A STRONG COMPACT WITH SCHOOLS

A key conclusion of the research on decentralization is that meaningful school-based management entails more than creating school-site councils with the power to make some decisions. To boost results, a school-based management structure must be comprehensive and carefully designed, and it must be used to implement rigorous curriculum standards in a restructured school organization.—Allen Odden[1]

The fourth component speaks to forging a strong compact between schools and district offices. Since the demands of comprehensive school reform necessitate greater autonomy at the building level, the relationship between schools and districts needs to change. Schools simply cannot pursue their comprehensive school reform approaches if they do not have some control over resources, time, and personnel, or are not building the capacity to make that autonomy possible in the future. The fourth and fifth components flow together in an important way: A relationship well balanced in accountability, support, and authority (discussed in this component) requires a rigorous dedication to capacity building (discussed in the fifth component).

Action Step: ***Create a system of results-based accountability.***

School autonomy must be embedded in a system that holds schools accountable for results. Only then can district leaders rest assured that the freedoms they are granting schools will be used to improve student achievement. Your district will want to examine some of the following central design issues involved in results-based accountability:

- ***The foundation: standards.*** At the heart of any educational accountability system is a set of standards that sets forth what students are expected to know and be able to do at different points in their development. Only in the context of such standards can districts hope to judge the degree to which students are achieving. Most states have adopted statewide standards and many districts have their own standards that exceed or supplement these. As important as district- or statewide standards are, though, they can create a tension in the context of comprehensive school reform. Under CSR, schools within a district may pursue paths that differ widely. In principle, these divergent paths can be different routes to the same destination: meeting a common set of standards. But in some cases, a CSR model's standards may differ from official standards in significant ways.

  Districts have an important role to play in determining how well a model's standards align with the district's and in working closely with teachers to close any gaps by modifying or supplementing the model's approach. In this process, however, district officials need to take care not to lose sight of the importance of individual schools' chosen paths and of models' unique approaches.

- ***Performance goals.*** While student standards are the foundation of an accountability system, the district and school must go the next

Forging a Strong Compact With Schools at a glance

- Create a system of results-based accountability.
- Give schools the autonomy they need to implement their chosen models.
- Clearly define, differentiate, and communicate the respective roles and requirements of the district office and the schools.
- Encourage hiring and retaining principals who know and support a school's particular model.
- Provide regular opportunities for schools to evaluate the services of the district office.

Resources on results-based accountability

Education Commission of the States. See www.ecs.org for ordering:

Standards & education: A roadmap for state policymakers, designing and implementing standards-based accountability systems. (1996).

A policymaker's guide to standards-led assessment. (2000).

Quality Counts 1999. [Entire Issue]. (1999, January). *Education Week*, XVIII(17). Available online: www.edweek.org/sreports/qc99.

Furhman, S. (1999). *The new accountability.* Consortium for Policy Research in Education. [Online]. Available: www.gse.upenn.edu/cpre/docs.pubs/rb27.pdf

step of setting performance goals or targets for the *school as a whole.* They must also develop a set of measures for evaluating the school's progress toward the goals. In some states and districts, these goals are determined centrally according to formulas or generic goals that apply to all schools. But where districts have flexibility, they can consider allowing performance goals to vary by school. In this way, they can capture schools' unique needs within the overall district framework. While all goals might have common elements (e.g., overall performance or growth on state-mandated tests), other elements might differ from school to school depending upon the chosen comprehensive school reform approach.

- ***Clear consequences.*** Accountability systems include a set of consequences for schools based upon the degree to which they meet their targeted goals. Ideally, these consequences proceed in predictable stages; for example, by beginning with the earliest signs of lagging performance. Again, districts must strike a balance between intervening in struggling schools and allowing schools to pursue their chosen approaches. Some reforms may take considerable time to take root and show improvement gains. Intervening prematurely could short-circuit a school's long-term efforts to improve. But failing to intervene appropriately means that students continue to attend a school that is not offering them what they deserve.

Action Tool 13: Accountability Map can aid you in thinking through the fundamental issues related to accountability. **Action Tool 14: Accountability** can be used to self-assess how well your district supports school accountability.

Action Step: *Give schools the autonomy they need to implement their chosen models.*

Pursuing comprehensive school reform requires significant authority at the school site. How much and what type of authority a school needs depends upon the CSR approach it has selected. But, in general, schools will need to have a say over how they allocate resources, how they staff their schools, how teaching and learning take place within classrooms, how they develop the professional capabilities of their people, and how they make decisions about the future.

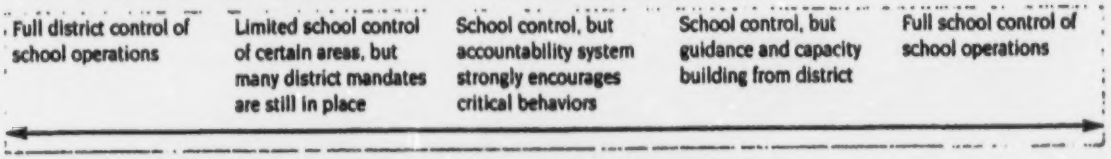
Your district will want to consider some of the following central design issues in undertaking decentralization.

What decisions about the operation of schools should be made at the school level? In the context of comprehensive school reform, some of the most important areas to consider are:

- Instructional program (including how the school will go about meeting district or state standards, what materials it will use, etc.)
- Use of time (including how the school will organize the school day, teachers' time, and the school year)
- Professional development

- Personnel (overall composition of the school staff as well as selection, dismissal, and evaluation of individual staff)
- Budgeting and financial management

How much authority should schools have? School-level autonomy is not an all-or-nothing proposition. Between the extremes of full district control of school operations and full school control lies a range of options:


Full district control of school operations
Limited school control of certain areas, but many district mandates are still in place
School control, but accountability system strongly encourages critical behaviors
School control, but guidance and capacity building from district
Full school control of school operations

Who at the school site should have authority? Districts have approached this question in different ways. One possibility is to enhance the authority of the principal to make decisions in key areas. Another is to empower a school-site council composed of a mix of stakeholders to make these decisions. A third option is to place authority in the hands of the principal but establish an advisory school-site council as well. In districts with charter schools or private companies managing particular schools, the legal entity—the charter school board or management company—gains the authority.

How can districts deal with outside constraints on decentralization? As they seek to loosen constraints on schools, districts may find that they face constraints themselves. State or federal law may include provisions on the use of school funds, the handling of personnel matters, or other issues that make it impossible to give schools the autonomy that districts want to grant. Collective bargaining contracts may contain additional constraints. However, districts and professional associations across the country have begun to explore ways that contracts can be modified to accommodate reform efforts. For one source of ideas, including local examples, see the National Education Association's "Unionism" site at http://www.nea.org/newunion

How can districts address uneasiness about school-site authority? External constraints aside, district leaders who favor greater school-site authority may face uneasiness on the part of school board members or central office officials about granting more autonomy to schools. Here are some strategies autonomy-minded district leaders can use to address these concerns:

- ***Link school autonomy to accountability contracts.*** Autonomy can be part of a "bargain" between districts and schools, in which schools gain authority by agreeing to stricter accountability for results. If districts retain the authority to intervene in schools that are not achieving results, district staff and school board members may be less apprehensive about ceding autonomy to the schools.
- **Make autonomy contingent on past performance.** In some districts, schools gain maximum flexibility only when they have proven they can handle it. The downside of this approach is that it does not lift constraints on low-performing schools that could use autonomy to improve their outcomes.

- ***Focus on capacity building.*** Fears about school-level autonomy often stem from concerns about schools' capacities to handle their new responsibilities. As discussed in detail in the fifth component, districts can take great strides toward building this capacity with a combination of district-provided and outside assistance.

Action Step: ***Clearly define, differentiate, and communicate the respective roles and requirements of the district office and the schools.***

Experience has shown that one of the biggest problems plaguing school reform and decentralization efforts is a lack of understanding of who is supposed to do what.

To avoid or at least diminish this confusion, it is essential for your district to define and widely communicate the responsibilities of individual schools and the district office. This means not only defining the respective roles and responsibilities, but also demonstrating how they are distinct yet interconnected. In this way, it will be clearer how the school and the central office will be working together to accomplish the overall district objectives. **Action Tool 15: Roles and Responsibilities in the Operation of a School** can help in this process.

Action Step: ***Encourage hiring and retaining principals who know and support a school's particular model.***

Studies of the implementation of CSR have highlighted the importance of leadership at the school site if the reform is to be a success. If principals come and go during implementation, the progress of change can suffer—especially if newly assigned principals do not support the reform.[3] By allowing a supportive principal to stay the course of reform at a school and assigning supportive new principals in cases of turnover, your district can greatly enhance the probability of success. There are two broad approaches for ensuring a match between a school's leadership and its reform effort:

District commitment to assign supportive principals. In most districts, central office officials hire and assign principals to schools. Therefore, a commitment to making and retaining good matches offers a straightforward approach for many districts. Under such an approach, the district commits not to move a principal from a school undergoing reform if the school community and the principal are pleased with the arrangement. The district commits to replace a departing principal with another who supports the school's reform effort.

School autonomy to select principals. Under the second approach, the district empowers a school-site council made up of school stakeholders to select the school's principal. Variants of this approach include allowing councils to select candidates from a district-approved short list or allowing councils to make recommendations to the district. If the school-site council is the "keeper" of the school's reform efforts, these approaches help ensure a compatible school leader and build capacity in the school.

Action Step: ***Provide regular opportunities for schools to evaluate the services of the district office.***

As the school is accountable to the central office (and the community) for effectively educating students, so too should the central office be accountable to the schools for providing the best possible services and support. Thus, your district office should take steps to ensure that the services it is providing are useful to the schools. One way to do this is to ask schools to evaluate district-provided services on a regular basis and then to act on the schools' responses. A simple online or written survey will supply your district office with concrete suggestions for improvement and will allow it to discover which services the schools desire. Additionally, it will give schools a constructive mechanism through which to make suggestions and assure them that the district office is committed to serving schools. **Action Tool 16: School Evaluation of the District Office** is one example of a survey that schools can use to provide feedback to district personnel.

Endnotes

1. Odden, A. (n.d.). *How to create and manage a decentralized school system.* New American Schools Getting Better by Design Series. [Online]. Available: www.naschools.org/resource/howto/oddec.pdf
2. Bodilly, S. (1998). *Lessons from New American Schools' scale-up phase: Prospects for bringing designs to multiple schools,* Santa Monica, CA

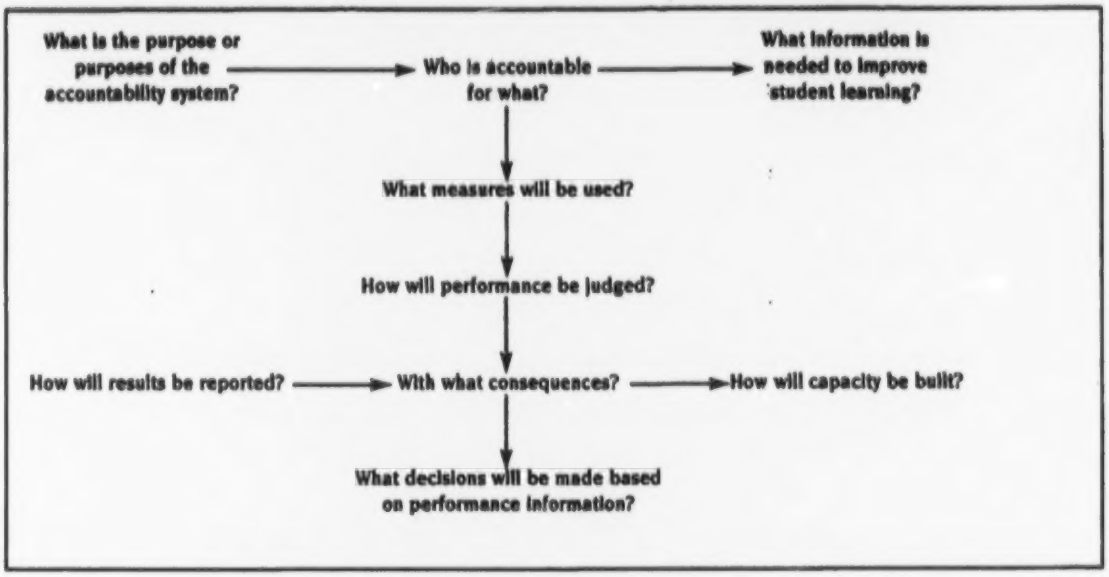
Action Questions: Forging a New Compact With Schools

- How will schools be held accountable for achieving results with students? How will performance goals be set and over what time frame? What consequences will follow different levels of performance? How, if at all, will accountability plans differ for schools pursuing CSR in comparison to other schools in the district (e.g., areas assessed, time given to reach goals, consequences for not reaching goals)? Will the district include implementation factors in evaluating/monitoring schools engaged in CSR?
- What steps could the district take to address tension between CSR model components and state/district standards and accountability requirements? Who (department, team, and so on) would take lead responsibility for working with schools on this matter?
- What areas of autonomy will schools possess? Will this degree of autonomy vary by school based upon previously decided requirements (e.g., demonstrated achievement levels)?
    - Instructional program (e.g., instructional practices materials, and so on)
    - Use of time (e.g., length and schedule of school day and school year)
    - Professional development (e.g., type, scheduling, and number of training sessions; methods of ongoing professional development)
    - Personnel (e.g., selection, dismissal, evaluation)
    - Budget (e.g., programs, facilities, staff)
    - Other
- What steps could the district take to define, differentiate, and communicate the respective roles and requirements of the district office and the schools?
- What steps could the district take to enable competent principals who are supportive of their schools' CSR approaches to remain at their schools?
- What steps could the district take to ensure that a competent new principal who supports the school's approach to CSR replaces an outgoing principal?
- What structures and processes could the district establish to allow schools to evaluate the programs and services of the central office? Who (department, team, and so on) would take lead responsibility for compiling and distributing the results?

ACTION TOOL 13:
ACCOUNTABILITY MAPPING

This accountability decision point chart is adapted from Armstrong and O'Brien of the Education Commission of the States. District personnel can work with schools to complete this accountability map, which will clearly delineate for districts and for schools what is expected of each of them.

Directions: Using this model as a guide, answer the questions on the chart on the next page.


What is the purpose or purposes of the accountability system?
Who is accountable for what?
What information is needed to improve student learning?
What measures will be used?
How will performance be judged?
How will results be reported?
With what consequences?
How will capacity be built?
What decisions will be made based on performance information?

Source: Armstrong, J., & O'Brien, J. (1998). *Decision points in designing a standards-based accountability system*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Adapted with permission.

What is the purpose or purposes of the accountability system?	**Who is accountable for what?**	**What information is needed to improve student learning?**
	What measures will be used?	
	How will performance be judged?	
How will results be reported?	**With what consequences?**	**How will capacity be built?**
	What decisions will be made based on performance information?	

ACTION TOOL 14: ACCOUNTABILITY

Directions: Use this tool to assess how well the district supports school accountability. Put an "X" in the column that most closely describes how well the district meets the following objectives. Use the Notes column to identify any area the district would like to make a priority or to make other brief comments.

Setting Standards, Goals, and Plans	Not at All	Some-what	For the Most Part	Fully	Notes
The central office staff works in a structured way to ensure all schools understand and incorporate state/district standards.					
The central office requires all schools to complete an annual school improvement plan.					
The central office provides assistance to schools in completing this plan.					
Each school has a clearly defined set of targets for performance and improvement.					
Schools' results relative to targets are linked to predictable consequences for schools and school employees.					
Consequences proceed in such a way that schools have a reasonable number of chances to receive help before severe sanctions are carried out.					
Positive incentives are in place to encourage schools to exceed expectations.					
Measuring Results and Using the Data					
The central office has developed assessments that measure progress toward meeting standards.					
The central office staff works closely with school personnel to understand and use the results gained from evaluation for the improvement of student learning.					
School personnel are trained to use the results from the evaluation to improve student learning.					
All schools receive evaluation results in time to make appropriate instructional and other changes for the next year.					

ACTION TOOL 15:
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE OPERATION OF A SCHOOL

Directions: Use this tool to brainstorm district and school responsibilities in a variety of facets of school operations. Though in some cases other entities (e.g., the state legislature, the school board) have primary authority over a certain topic, such as standards, the district and the school will still have their own responsibilities beyond simply executing these policies or procedures. For example, when it comes to standards, the district and school must still resolve who will be responsible for training and supporting teachers in the standards and what exactly this training and support will entail. In addition, identifying the persons responsible for each topic or subtopic takes this tool a step further and lays out who is responsible for what.

For each of the subtopics, list district and school responsibilities and identify who is in charge.

Topic and Pertinent Subtopics	District Responsibilities	District Point Person(s)	School Responsibilities	School Point Person(s)
Instructional Programs				
Standards • Process of standards creation • Content of standards • Training on standards				
Curriculum • Curriculum content • Curriculum order and pacing • Flexibility				
Instructional approach • Methodology (e.g., direct instruction, cooperative learning) • Grouping (e.g., heterogeneous, homogeneous)				
Textbooks/other instructional materials • Textbook/materials selection • Textbook/materials replacement schedule				
Student assessment • Methods (e.g., tests, portfolios, performance assessment) • Promotion requirements • Graduation requirements • Use (e.g., to report overall performance to the public) • Restrictions (e.g, which children will not be counted in overall school score)				

Topic and Pertinent Subtopics	District Responsibilities	District Point Person(s)	School Responsibilities	School Point Person(s)
Use of Time				
School year • Student days in session • Teacher days in session School day • Length/time of academic day • Length/time of before- and after-school programs • Class scheduling (e.g., block)				
Personnel				
Staff positions • Composition (e.g., FTE, para-pro, other) • Deployment				
Evaluation • Methodology • Use • Confidentiality				
Hiring/firing • Pool from which to draw teachers • Qualifications/job descriptions				
Rewards/promotions • Criteria definition • Type/amount of reward/ promotion • Financing reward/ promotion • Use of reward/promotion				
Salaries • Amount • Correlation with experience, achievement • Caps				
Unions • Negotiations • General communication • Representation				
School Governance				
School head • Job description • Selection • Duties (e.g., mainly administrative vs. mainly instructional leader • Tenure • Leadership development				

Topic and Pertinent Subtopics	District Responsibilities	District Point Person(s)	School Responsibilities	School Point Person(s)
Leadership councils • Composition • Authority/responsibility • Duties • Relationship to school head • Tenure				
Professional Development (both discrete and ongoing)				
Topic requirements (e.g., every teacher must have 2 paid days on child development every 5 years) • Content • Schedule • Length • Financing • Instructors • Evaluation • Mentoring				
Budgeting				
Allocation of school funding to major spending categories • Development of draft allocation • Approval of allocation • Change of allocation midyear				
Major contracts for goods and services • Approval process • Restrictions (e.g., amounts, vendors) • Legal clarifications				
Dispersal of funds • Categories (e.g., instructional materials, salaries) • Process • Stipulations (e.g., targeted vs. unrestricted spending) • Timeline • Points of contact				
Auditing of school financial practices Process • Necessary information • Consequences				

Topic and Pertinent Subtopics	District Responsibilities	District Point Person(s)	School Responsibilities	School Point Person(s)
Evaluation				
CSR implementation (how well activities and inputs are used) ° Measurement ° Benchmarks ° Training in use ° Use ° Consequences ° Financing				
School Improvement Outcomes ° Measurement ° Benchmarks ° Training in use ° Use ° Consequences ° Financing				

ACTION TOOL 16
SCHOOL EVALUATION OF THE DISTRICT OFFICE

This sample survey is designed for schools to evaluate the support and services received from the district. District personnel administer the evaluation, and schools provide their feedback to the district office. Follow-up focus groups could enhance the information collected.

Directions: Please take a few minutes to evaluate the district office's work and services. The first section asks questions to help us code your answers; however, be assured that all responses will remain anonymous. The second section offers a series of statements; please respond using the provided scale. The third section offers space for you to record any comments or suggestions.

Please put an "X" by the choice that most closely matches your or your school's characteristics.

School Level	___Elementary ___Middle/Junior High ___High School
Position at the School	___Classroom Teacher ___Special Subject Teacher ___Administration ___Support Staff ___Other _____
School Demographics	___Less than 20% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch. ___Between 20-40% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch. ___Between 40-60% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch. ___Between 60-80% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch. ___More than 80% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch.
What is your school's performance rating in the last full academic year? Use the term used by your district/state to rate schools (e.g., "high performing," "2nd quartile," "met expectations")	
Please mark all that apply:	___I have attended district-run professional development sessions. ___ I have served on committees that include district staff. ___ I have consulted with district staff members about: ___ Curriculum or instructional issues. ___ Assessment or accountability issues. ___ Financial or operational issues. ___ Human resource issues. ___ I have worked with district staff in other ways. (*Please elaborate.*)

Please circle the response that most closely matches your agreement with each of the statements. Use the following rubric:

5—I strongly agree.

4—I agree.

3—I am neutral.

2—I disagree.

1—I strongly disagree.

DK/NA—I don't know, or this statement does not apply to me.

General	Strongly disagree ◁——▷ Strongly agree					
1. The district office's primary mission is to help improve teaching and learning in the schools.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
2. The district staff is knowledgeable about and understands our school's needs and circumstances.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
3. The district staff keeps abreast of educational research.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
4. The district is dedicated to finding long-term solutions to school improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
Standards/Accountability						
1. The district has established standards that are challenging and realistic.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
2. The district has written standards that are clear and coherent.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
3. The district solicited ample input from the schools and the community when drafting the standards.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
4. The district uses an assessment mechanism for evaluating schools that is fair and understandable.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
5. The district solicited ample input from the schools and the community when creating the assessment mechanisms.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
6. The district has set challenging and realistic performance targets for our school.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
7. The district helps our school to understand performance results and to use them to make needed changes.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
8. The district has set fair and unambiguous consequences for schools failing to meet expectations.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
9. The district has established sound incentives for schools meeting or exceeding expectations.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA

School Autonomy/Capacity Building	Strongly disagree ◄——► Strongly agree					
1. The district provides schools with adequate flexibility in school budgeting.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
2. The district provides schools with adequate resources, training, and assistance in making budgeting decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
3. The district provides schools with adequate flexibility in school staffing.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
4. The district provides schools with adequate resources, training, and assistance in making staffing decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
5. The district provides schools with adequate flexibility in how the school day and school year are scheduled.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
6. The district provides schools with adequate resources, training, and assistance in making school day and school year scheduling decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
7. The district provides schools with adequate flexibility in professional development.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
8. The district provides schools with adequate resources, training, and assistance in making professional development decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
9. The district provides schools with adequate flexibility in instructional practices.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
10. The district provides schools with adequate resources, training, and assistance in making instructional practice decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
11. The district provides schools with adequate flexibility in how facilities are used.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
12. The district provides schools with adequate resources, training, and assistance in making facilities-use decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
Services						
1. The district provides effective technical assistance in helping our school fulfill its mission and operate successfully day to day.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
2. The district provides timely technical assistance in helping our school fulfill its mission and operate successfully day to day.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
3. The district provides coordinated technical assistance in helping our school fulfill its mission and operate successfully day to day.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
4. The district provides effective and relevant professional development sessions and training for teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA

Services	Strongly disagree ◁——▷ Strongly agree					
5. The district provides effective and relevant professional development sessions and training for principals.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
6. The district provides effective and relevant professional development sessions and training for other school personnel (e.g., school counselors).	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
7. The district attends to school maintenance requests in a timely fashion.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
8. The district provides the technological infrastructure our schools need to be successful.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
9. The district provides the technological training our schools need to be successful.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
10. The district provides efficient and safe transportation for the district's students.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
Resources						
1. The district uses an equitable method for allotting funds to schools.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
2. The district uses an understandable formula for allotting funds to schools.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
3. The district uses an effective and equitable system for placing principals in schools.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
4. The district uses an effective and equitable system for placing teachers in schools.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
5. The district provides safe facilities for all students in the district.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
Communication						
1. The district solicits and uses school input when making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
2. The district keeps all schools informed about information, events, and changes within the district.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
3. The district leaders and staff are accessible to school personnel.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA
4. The district communicates its support of the public school system to the community.	1	2	3	4	5	DK/NA

Please use the following space to record any comments or suggestions you have about how the district office might improve.

BUILDING CAPACITY

We propose an audacious goal...by the year 2006, America will provide all students with what should be their educational birthright: access to competent, caring and qualified teachers—National Commission on Teaching and America's Future[1]

The changing role of the district office in comprehensive school reform involves its becoming a center that establishes results-based accountability for schools and then provides them with the necessary support to achieve those results. Capacity building through professional development is one important means of providing support. It serves two basic purposes:

- To furnish school and district personnel with the skills and tools they need to provide strong teaching and learning within the classroom
- To demonstrate to school and district personnel that they are worth the investment

As noted by some researchers,[2] there seems to be an underlying idea that good teaching skills are innate, not learned qualities. This misconception has led to a lack of attention to building the capacity of teachers. The truth is that teaching relies in good measure on a number of specific skills that can be taught. We need to shift away from the idea that good teachers are "born, not made" and to recognize that virtually all teachers can be effective given the right support and training.

Action Step: ***Give schools the flexibility they need over the content and scheduling of professional development activities.***

Each school needs the flexibility to participate in the professional development required by its CSR approach without having to struggle to meet districtwide professional development content or schedule demands that may have little relevance. The Cincinnati Public Schools addressed this difficulty by asking model providers to incorporate the kind of training the district wants teachers to have into the model provider-furnished professional development. In this way, educators get the skills the districts want them to have, but within the context of the model the school is implementing.

This arrangement, though quite helpful to schools, is only part of the solution. First, model providers often face capacity constraints that make it impossible to provide professional development tailored specifically to one school. Second, a number of important, general CSR skills fall outside the purview of CSR models. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that schools may find the most effective and relevant opportunities if they are well informed about available offerings and have the freedom to choose the best "product" possible. The district therefore has a valuable role to play in professional development, even if it doesn't offer one professional development activity itself: providing flexibility, within the context of accountability and support.

Building Capacity at a glance

- Give schools the flexibility they need over the content and scheduling of professional development activities.
- Offer training or help schools find external training in skills that support CSR and the district's goals.
- Provide a voluntary set of standards or guidelines for professional development as well as opportunities for teacher evaluation of professional development.
- Train district staff members in specific models, and designate a district coordinator of CSR.
- Facilitate professional networks and other means of ongoing professional development.
- Forge a connection with area teaching colleges.

Professional Development Opportunities in Memphis

Teachers in Memphis City Schools have almost complete flexibility in choosing the scheduling and content of their training sessions. Since all Memphis City Schools are adopting CSR models, much of the professional development is facilitated by the model providers. The district-run Memphis Teaching and Learning Academy, however, also offers a number of institutes, seminars, study groups, action labs, and instructional technology sessions that are often used by Memphis teachers. Teachers may register through traditional paper forms, online, or with a new electronic registration system. The electronic system also allows the district office and school principals to keep track of which teachers have participated in what sessions. For more information, see the Memphis School Reform Web site:

www.memphis-schools.k12.tn.us/admin/tlapages/academyhome.html

Action Step: ***Offer training or help schools find external training in skills that support CSR and the district's goals.***

Schools working with external models will receive technical support and expertise from the model providers themselves. However, as mentioned in the previous action step, these providers cannot supply all of the schools' capacity-building services directly or help schools obtain outside assistance. Model providers may not be able to meet all schools' needs in two specific areas:

1. ***Skills required to engage in CSR, no matter which model is chosen.*** Some examples are:
   - Using data and research to assess needs and evaluate CSR models
   - Involving diverse stakeholders in school decision making
   - Leading the change process (for principals and leadership teams)
   - Collaborating as a faculty
   - Selecting and evaluating teachers and staff
   - Contracting with external providers of professional development
2. ***Classroom preparation (content related to district or state goals that are not addressed by CSR models).*** Some examples of these skills are:
   - Working with special education students
   - Computer proficiency
   - Foreign language
   - Conflict resolution
   - Multicultural awareness
   - Identifying children suffering from abuse

Your district may or may not be the best provider of a particular form of training. For example, your district staff might be the best provider of training in budgeting skills but may not have the expertise needed to train school personnel in using quantitative data to analyze needs and trends in student-performance data. This vital skill might best be offered by an external provider. The **Action Tool 17: Capacity-Building Resources Tool** should help your central office determine what training it can offer and what training would be best furnished by an external provider.

If your district opts not to provide particular forms of training, it can still play a role in helping schools find the support they need:

1. In some cases, your district may be able to work with comprehensive school reform models to incorporate certain kinds of training into the model's professional development.
2. The district can act as a "resource center," providing information to schools about a diverse range of external providers (see the box below for potential sources of staff development).

3. The district can provide a set of standards and/or tools to help schools look for the most effective professional development (see the next action step).

All of these actions require regular communication between the schools and the district. By regularly asking schools what services they need, your district office will have a better sense of what schools need in the way of supplemental training.

Action Step: ***Provide a voluntary set of standards or guidelines for professional development as well as opportunities for teacher evaluation of professional development.***

In a system in which each school chooses its own professional development activities, districts can develop and distribute a voluntary set of standards or guidelines for schools to use in their selection processes. In this way, districts can support professional development without imposing restrictions. See the box below for an example of professional development standards (U.S. Department of Education) and page 86 for Resources on Professional Development.

U.S. Department of Education:
Elements of Effective Professional Development

The Elements of Effective Professional Development are:

- Provides time for professional learning to occur in a meaningful manner.
- Respects and encourages the leadership development of teachers.
- Develops, refines, and expands teachers' pedagogical repertoire, content knowledge, and the use of continuous inquiry and reflection.
- Provides for and promotes the use of continuous inquiry and reflection.
- Provides for collaboration and collegial work, balanced with opportunities for individual learning.
- Follows the principles of good teaching and learning, including providing comfortable, respectful environments conducive to adult learning.
- Creates broad-based support of professional development from all sectors of the organization and community through reciprocal processes for providing information and soliciting feedback.
- Builds in accountability practices and evaluation of professional development programs to provide a foundation for future planning.
- Uses student performance and achievement data, including student feedback, teacher observation, analysis of student work, and test scores as part of the process for individual and organizational learning.
- Uses a coherent long-term professional development planning process, connected to the school plan that reflects both site-based priorities and individual learning goals.

For more information on professional development from the U.S. Department of Education, see **www.ed.gov/** (search for teacher quality).

Potential Sources of Externally Provided Professional Development Activities

- U.S. Department of Education, regional laboratories (e.g., NCREL) and comprehensive assistance centers, state departments of education
- Exchanges with other school districts
- Teachers unions
- For-fee providers
- Colleges and universities
- Professional organizations (e.g., AERA)

Resources on professional development

Haslam, M. B. (n.d.). *How to build a local professional development infrastructure.* New American Schools. Getting Better By Design Series. [Online]. Available: www.naschools.org/resource/howto/haslam.pdf.

Hassel, E. (1999). *Learning from the best: A toolkit for schools and districts based on model professional development award winners.* [Online]. Available: www.ncrel.org/pd

Massel, D. (1998, July). State strategies for building local capacity: Addressing the needs of standards-based reform. *CPRE Policy Brief.* [Online]. Available: www.gse.upenn.edu/cpre/docs/pubs/rb25.pdf

In addition to offering voluntary standards or guidelines, your district needs to provide an evaluation mechanism for district-provided training. Evaluation is crucial to having effective staff development. Teachers need multiple opportunities for evaluating a staff development activity. In this way, they can initially assess the activity and then later assess its lessons once they are applied in the classroom. Effective professional development is the result of careful design, and this design must be based (a) on the feedback of those who use the activities and (b) on the impact the training has on student learning.

Checklist for determining if professional development activities are satisfactory.

- ❑ The activities are subject to regular review and revision based on participant feedback and new findings in the research base.
- ❑ Instructors have a good deal of expertise in the activity topic.
- ❑ The activities are designed to meet specific development needs identified through systematic analysis.
- ❑ The activities encourage and/or put into place means (e.g., networks, follow-up activities, tools) to help continue the learning and support once in the classroom.
- ❑ Participants offer positive feedback on the activities.
- ❑ Teachers have had input into the design of the activities.
- ❑ Efforts are made to evaluate the impact of the training on student learning. Such evaluation demonstrates positive effects.

Action Step: ***Train district staff members in the specific models, and designate a district coordinator of CSR models.***

CSR models are generally open to allowing or even encouraging district staff to attend training sessions. Your district should take advantage of this opportunity if at all possible. District staff must be knowledgeable about CSR and the various models so they can provide the best support possible to schools. In this way, schools can obtain assistance from any district staff member and feel confident that the central office has made CSR a districtwide commitment.

A previous section (Facilitating Informed Choice) illustrated the advantage of having a district coordinator when schools search for CSR models that best match their circumstances. The role of district coordinator becomes even more important as schools and model providers actually embark on implementation. A study of the district coordinator position in New American Schools (NAS) districts suggests that these coordinators typically fill one or more roles, including[3]:

- Acting as an advocate/ombudsman for the model design within the district

- Providing logistical support for the model providers
- Assisting in school-level implementation

NAS's experience has also shown that district coordinators have been more successful in the first two roles than the last. This makes sense inasmuch as district staff members are not likely to have experience in any particular model and would not necessarily have the expertise to help in implementation. Though model providers will offer as much support as they can, the district staff is in a better position to help schools on a day-to-day basis. To facilitate implementation, many models ask for a school-based model facilitator. However, such a position does not eliminate the need for a district coordinator. Because of the number of district-level issues (for both the schools and the models), it is much more expedient to have a district-level position dedicated to CSR coordination.

Action Step: *Facilitate professional networks and other means of ongoing professional development.*

Even with strong professional development opportunities, teachers often go back to their classrooms alone to use their new skills with no ongoing support from other teachers who are applying the same training. Research suggests that this usually results in low usage rates of new teaching strategies.[4] CSR models have identified this isolation factor and have developed networks to provide support for teachers. Your district can play a role in encouraging teachers to participate in networks and in strengthening school-based collegiality.

Your district can also help schools to view professional development as a daily experience embedded in their routine tasks, not as a collection of training sessions. Daily professional development can include teacher mentoring, peer coaching, group reflection, personal journal reflections, and networks. Ann Lieberman[5] has done extensive research on the role and uses of professional networks to aid teachers in their improvement efforts. **Action Tool 18: Starting and Maintaining a Network** is a checklist that can help your district start a network for teachers whose schools are implementing CSR. Even though most teachers are involved in the model-provider network, building a district network is important for meeting district challenges and for developing district capacity through professional learning communities.

Action Step: *Forge a connection with area teaching colleges.*

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, more than half of the teaching force of 2006 will have been hired in the ten years between 1996 and 2006.[6] This influx of newly trained teachers presents an opportunity for districts like yours to have a significant impact on the quality of teaching in America's schools.

Your district can work directly with area colleges and universities to discuss what skills are needed to teach in today's (and tomorrow's) schools. The U.S. Department of Education is spearheading efforts to increase both the quality of teacher preparation programs and the connection between institutes of higher education and K-12 (see **www.ed.gov/teacherquality/**

prepare.html). In addition, a number of CSR model providers are partnering with schools of education to provide coursework for future teachers in the content and philosophy of their models. Model providers are also creating professional development schools in partnership with districts. These options open possibilities for newly trained teachers to enter a CSR school already trained in the concepts and needed skills of comprehensive school reform. If your district has strong ties to universities, it may more readily bring new teachers into schools implementing CSR.

Endnotes

1. *What matters most: Teaching for America's future.* (1996). New York: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.
2. See for example Elmore, R. (1996). *Getting to scale with good educational practice. Harvard Educational Review,* (66)1, 1-26.
3. Haslam, M. B. (n.d.). *How to build a local professional development infrastructure.* New American Schools. Getting Better By Design Series. [Online]. Available: www.naschools.org/resources/howto/haslam.pdf.
4. Lashway, L. (1998, April). *Creating a learning organization.* ERIC Digest, Number 121. Eugene, OR: Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon.
5. Lieberman, A., & Grolnick, M. (1996). Networks and reform in American Education. *Teachers College Record, 98*(1), 7-45.
6. Darling-Hammond, L. (1996, November). What matters most: A competent teacher for every child. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 78, 193-200.

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Action Questions: Building Capacity

- What means could the district use to determine topics and formats for district-provided professional development activities?
- What criteria could the district put in place to determine if it is the best provider of certain staff training (e.g., available capacity, expertise and availability of other providers, teacher evaluation of the particular district-provided staff training activity)?
- Who are some other potential providers of professional development activities (e.g., regional educational laboratories, model providers, professional organizations, universities)?
- What structures and processes can the district put into place to collaborate with these other providers of staff training? Who (department, team, and so on) would take lead responsibility for initiating and maintaining the collaboration?
- What steps could the district take to ensure that all central office staff are aware of and understand CSR and the various CSR models?
- Does the district have the capacity to designate a district liaison for CSR? Does it consider this to be important?
- What structures and processes could the district establish to help schools and the district network with other schools and districts? Who (department, team, and so on) would take lead responsibility for facilitating these networks?
- What other steps could the district take to encourage ongoing professional development (e.g., mentoring, peer coaching, group reflection time, personal journals)?
- What structures and processes could the district establish to work with area teaching colleges to provide support for current teachers, experience for preservice teachers, and real-world lessons for teachers of teachers? Who (department, team, and so on) would take lead responsibility for initiating and maintaining this partnership?

ACTION TOOL: 17
CAPACITY-BUILDING RESOURCES TOOL

Directions: This tool is designed to help you analyze the current status of and prospects for CSR capacity building. The left-hand column lists a set of capacities that are important to any school undertaking CSR (and you may wish to add more). For each capacity, the tool asks you to indicate whether the district or another provider offers good help in this area or if it is likely to be offered by the model providers. If a capacity does not appear to be well covered by existing resources, the district should indicate whether it should work with external providers or develop and offer this type of capacity building itself. You can use the form by simply checking the appropriate box or by writing notes within boxes to indicate status or plans.

	District Already Offers	Another Provider Already Offers (e.g., university)	Model Developers Are Likely to Offer	District Should Work With Providers to Develop/Offer	District Should Develop/Offer Directly
Needs assessment/use of data and research					
Developing an overall CSR approach					
Governance and decision making					
Selecting and evaluating teachers and staff					
Involving parents and others in decision making					
Selecting appropriate CSR models/other external assistance					
Negotiating a contract with an external provider of services					

	District Already Offers	Another Provider Already Offers (e.g., university)	Model Developers Are Likely to Offer	District Should Work With Providers to Develop/Offer	District Should Develop/Offer Directly
Aligning CSR approach with state or district standards					
Leadership/managing change					
Budgeting/reallocation of resources					
Complementing model-provider professional development with other professional development needs of the school					
Other:					
Other:					
Other:					
Other:					

ACTION TOOL 18
STARTING AND MAINTAINING A NETWORK

This checklist can aid you in starting a network. However, be aware that checking off this list will not necessarily create the network. It will only create the structure for the network. It is through the participants that a network comes together and takes shape. Successful networks take on a life of their own, and members remain engaged for long periods of time.

- ❑ Identify a small group of people for inclusion in the beginning. Include one or two individuals from a school that is implementing comprehensive school reform. Be clear about whom the network will serve.
- ❑ Ensure that the group spends time getting to know one another as well as doing work together.
- ❑ Articulate a compelling reason for participants to become involved. There needs to be a purpose that will sustain the initial interest of coming together.
- ❑ Identify a common task, a reason for meeting. If the task is not meaningful to them, people will vote with their feet and chose to not return.
- ❑ Create some group norms for behavior. Include revolving meeting spaces, so teachers can be in other buildings and see how other schools are implementing their reforms. Food always helps create an atmosphere of collegiality.
- ❑ Identify a point person for the network, someone who will send out materials or information via a Web site or e-mail list. This role can be revolving so one person does not get overwhelmed with the task; it also allows others to participate in a leadership role.
- ❑ Create a Web site or a network "library" to store and share information and materials already created, viewed, discussed, and so on.
- ❑ Provide timely information and share it with the group. Networks can easily lose momentum when there is too much time between meetings, when memos get lost and meetings are missed, and so on.
- ❑ Facilitate the group meetings. This is another leadership role that can revolve. A facilitator provides focus and keeps the group on task. These strategies keep the momentum up and provide the group with a sense of accomplishment.
- ❑ Obtain release time every so often for teachers to meet during the workday. This type of district support for the network will speak volumes to the teachers, underscoring that the work they are involved in has merit and is important.
- ❑ Engage an outside speaker every so often, with a specific message or an activity that pushes the group forward. Speakers with an important message can push the group out of "groupthink," which sometimes occurs when a group has been together for a while.

CONCLUSION

To make comprehensive school reform work, school-level leaders have to apply themselves to the difficult task of transforming school culture in ways that improve the quality of teaching and learning. District officials cannot mandate the kind of vision and commitment this transformation requires; but they still have a vital role to play in reform and improvement efforts. Indeed, comprehensive school reform cannot succeed without the active support of the district.

The school district's role begins with an articulation of a new vision for the district, a vision that centers on school-level efforts at comprehensive reform. Districts make this vision real by committing resources to the effort and by building support across the community for change. As the locus of reform shifts to the school level, the district plays the important role of helping schools make informed choices about the improvement paths they take. Plus, as the district passes significant authority to the school level, it holds schools accountable for results. To help make school-level reform a success, the central office provides better support for changes taking place in schools. Throughout the process, the district's focus is on capacity building—strengthening the ability of school-level people to take on the task of reform.

Districts pursuing comprehensive school reform will find themselves at different starting points. For some, parts of the "components" outlined in this guide will already be flowing steadily. For others, more significant change will be required. But all districts, no matter where they start, can benefit from the kind of self-examination that comprehensive school reform demands. Just as schools engaged in CSR assess themselves carefully and transform themselves across the board, so too can the districts.

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